# Creative Writing 10/11 Instructional Sample: Reflecting on who we are as writers

Learning is…reflective

Learning does not happen without reflection. Reflective thinking is a key process in coming to understand new concepts and determining the relevancy of information and ideas. It helps to makes sense of new experiences and use them to learn by connecting them to what is already known.

from the First People’s Principles of Learning Blog by Jo Chrona

### Introduction

This learning experience encourages students to reflect on who they are as writers, establish personal goals based on that reflection, and engage in a revision process that nurtures their personal growth.

Students are encouraged to create personal writing plans that establish goals and concrete actions for how they can grow their proficiency in creative writing. They do this by reading, revising, and reflecting on their own and others’ work.

### Big Ideas

* The exploration of text and story deepens our understanding of diverse, complex ideas about identity, others, and the world.
* Creative writers take risks and persevere.

## Learning Standards

### Curricular Competencies (What the students will DO)

* Read for enjoyment and to achieve personal goals
* Recognize and identify the role of personal, social, and cultural contexts, values, and perspectives in texts
* Reflect on, assess, and refine texts to improve their clarity, effectiveness, and impact

### Content

* Writer’s processes
* writing for authentic audiences and real-world purposes
* writing practice
* the importance of reading other writers
* Writer-reader relationship

### Core Competencies

Communication

Communicating

* Connecting and engaging with others
* Focusing on intent and purpose

Collaborating

* Working Collectively
* Supporting group interactions

### Thinking

Critical and Reflective Thinking

* Reflecting and assessing
* Analyzing and critiquing

Creative Thinking

* Creating and innovating

### Personal and Social

Personal Awareness and Responsibility

* Self-Regulating

### First Peoples’ Principles of Learning

Learning requires exploration of one’s identity.

Learning involves patience and time.

## Lesson Plan

### Activity 1: Storytellers and the Texts that Influence Them

Students will explore a variety of texts where authors discuss their personal writing process and describe the critical role reading plays in improving their writing. This activity can include descriptions of how authors are influenced by the texts around them and how what they read shapes their own writing and storytelling. The texts should be diverse in terms of voice and mode (oral, written, visual, and digital), and students should have choice in which resources to explore. This exploration can be done individually, in pairs, or even in small groups.

Guiding questions can be co-created with students. Students can then choose what the focus of their exploration will be depending on need or interest. For example, possible guiding questions may include:

* How has the author(s) used texts to improve specific aspects of their writing?
* How has reading helped the author(s) explore their own identity?
* Was there anything surprising that an author shared?

One possible resource for students to explore is the Read to Write video

<https://media.openschool.bc.ca/osbcmedia/wr12/video/overview_read_to_write.mp4>

In the video, three visiting authors share their opinions about reading, and its role for writers. Evelyn Lau talks about reading as part of her process in figuring out what other authors are doing, Matt Rader describes reading as fuel for a developing writer—and Andreas Schroeder talks about reading as one of many sources of ideas for writers.

After exploration, students can discuss ways to represent what they have learned. Presentations could include:

* Written reflection or journal writing
* Sharing in pairs or small groups
* Visual representations

### Activity 2: What texts and stories have influenced you?

Provide time for students to reflect on how texts and stores have influenced them. Possible questions that students can explore are: What texts have you read/viewed/listened to that have impacted you as a person and writer? What are you currently reading/viewing/listening to or want to read/view/listen to? Can you think of a specific example (e.g. a strategy, writing style, vocabulary use, etc.) from a text that you found particularly effective and either wanted to mimic or did mimic in your writing? How does this inspire or feed your own writing? Are there any strategies you use when you read critically (e.g. reading out loud, asking questions, analyzing sentences, taking notes, etc.)?

Students can share their reflections in many ways including written reflection, verbal sharing in pairs and small groups, and visual representations.

### Activity 3: Write Your Own Personal Creative Writing Plan

Ask your students: What do you need to learn next to become a better creative writer?

* Students will have different answers depending on what they are working on, and their creative writing skills.
* Have students examine what they have already written in the course as well as any reflections they have completed (including the work they did in the above activities).
* Students can consider:
* what is working (what they feel confident about, what comes easy)
* what do they want to work on (what do they find difficult)
* what have previous readers told them about their work,
* what do they admire in other storytellers that they would like to incorporate in their own writing)
* what steps they can take to improve those areas identified (this can include revisiting the texts they have identified as influential and do a close reading)

Students should then create their own Personal Creative Writing Action Plan. This should include long term goals and short-term goals (i.e., specific actions for revising a particular piece of creative writing).

### Activity 4: Workshop/Peer Review

After completing their Personal Creative Writing Action Plans, students will select a short piece of writing to share with at least one other student. They can do this through swapping work with another classmate or through a writer’s workshop. [link to Writing 12 page with Workshop rules: <http://ocr.openschool.bc.ca/mod/lesson/view.php?id=923&pageid=7730> ]

NOTE: Remind students that as they give, receive, and act on feedback, they are deeply engaged in practicing their Communication Core Competency. As they reflect on their proficiency at workshopping, they should also reflect on their communicating and collaborating competency.

After they have collected reader feedback, students will:

* Compare the feedback with their current action plan
* Revise their action plan accordingly (did their readers point out something about their writing that they were not aware of? Did their readers offer any suggestions for improvement that they can add into their action plan? Did any readers provide any examples of texts or stories that they could read/listen/view to improve an aspect of their writing?)
* If there is feedback that they disagree with, they should be able to provide a thoughtful response with supporting evidence and reasoning for why they are choosing to set the feedback aside
* Revise their piece of writing

### An example of one student’s feedback:

One student receives the following feedback from readers of their poetry samples:

* The poems all seem to end abruptly. Maybe lengthen the endings?
* The poems are too short to really develop the imagery.
* I didn’t really feel anything in particular when I was reading them.
* Maybe if your poems are longer you might have the space to really develop the imagery and create a feeling for the reader.

The student should be encouraged to reflect on this feedback. They may decide that the abrupt ending is intentional. Rather than lengthening or drawing out the ending as suggested, the student might work on how to use abrupt endings in a more impactful and intentional way.

### Core Competency Reflection

Interpreting feedback is a complex analytic skill. Many writers feel their readers are never wrong when they say something isn’t working—but they’re not always right about the way it should be fixed. Encourage students to decide for themselves whether to take their readers’ suggestions, or to develop their own solution when the suggestion doesn’t feel right.

Let students know they are practicing their critical and reflective thinking core competency in the realm of development and design as they do this work.

The student then adds the following goals to their Personal Creative Writing Action Plan:

* Read both longer and shorter poems by poets who do a good job of developing effective imagery and creating tone.
* When reading poems, consider the following: what specifically does the poet do to create deep imagery, and sustain a certain mood or feeling in the poem?
* Look at how the poets end their poems. How are the endings different from mine? What might be creating the “abrupt” feeling at the end of mine?
* Read craft books, paying attention to how to create strong imagery

They might ask their English teacher, or a librarian for help in finding the right sort of poetry collections.

After their done reading and analyzing other poems, they may write a more specific list of things to do in the revision of their sample poem as part of their Personal Creative Writing Action Plan:

* Include sensory detail
* Use sound. (Dissonance would help create the lack of harmony that the poem is trying to communicate.)
* Determine if there is a better image to end on for the poems that would help the meaning—the abrupt ending might feel different. Example:  
    
  I crept up to the yellow dog  
  pulled her tail like I was dared  
  Her eyes looked at me   
  with fear

Instead, maybe end with the image of the dog’s sore tail, and the speaker’s emotion:

* I crept up to the yellow dog  
  pulled her tail like I was dared  
  Then I cried to see her tail  
  hanging limp

It’s still an abrupt ending, but the choice of imagery creates the emotion in the reader more effectively, which gets to the heart of the reader’s issue with the poem without having to draw out the ending.

### Activity 5: How Many Revisions?

“What do you mean, the third draft? Or fourth! Or fifth!?”  
  
Students revise their creative writing based on their considered feedback, and further reading in their genre. The number of revisions for this activity should be driven by the number of times it takes for the writer to create the desired effect for their reader. This feedback loop is the foundation of becoming a better writer:

To deepen students understanding of revision, you may show them the videos How Many Revisions? And Process of Revision.

Possible questions students can consider about revision include:

* Is there anything you’re saving for a future piece that you can’t use in this piece?
* Do you need to get raw material down before you can shape a work? When do you think its time to share with a reader and invite feedback before revising? Do you think you’ll revise before you show it to a reader?
* How does the revision help you learn about the craft of writing?

When students are finished with the last cycle of review and revision, have students reflect on the following:

* How is trying something different and risking failing part of the writing process?
* What have you learned about your revision process, or what have you decided to change about your writing process?
* Tell me how you changed your piece to strengthen the intended effect it would have on your reader. If your piece already created the desired effect, what else did you learn from your reader’s feedback?
* What, if anything, do you need to modify on your action plan?