GP CREATIVE

A Creative Writing Course

GRAMMARPUNK
SENTENTIA GRAMMATICAE INTERPUNCTIQUE

GP CREATIVE™

A Creative Writing Course:

You ask me why I spend my life writing?
Do I find entertainment?
Is it worthwhile?
Above all, does it pay?
If not, then, is there a reason? . . .
I write only because
There is a voice within me
That will not be still.
A poem by —*Sylvia Plath*

"Put it before them briefly so they will read it, clearly so they will
appreciate it, picturesquely so they will remember it, and above all,
accurately so they will be guided by its light."
—*Joseph Pulitzer*

"As with all other aspects of the narrative art, you will improve with practice, but practice will
never make you perfect. Why should it? What fun would that be?"
—*Stephen King*

"Writing is an act of faith, not a trick of grammar."
—E. B. White

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GP Creative is written in lesson-plan format with easy-to-understand, and fun-to-follow instructions that will take your students through a complete and comprehensive creative writing course.

The basic elements of short stories are explored by highlighting the elements in a well-known short story.

GP Creative begins with the stepping stones of beginning writing which is ideal for beginning students and makes a refresher for more experienced students.

GP Creative immediately puts the writing experience in the hands and imaginations of students as they learn the basics by writing and using the Genre Cards.

Students will learn how to recognize, understand, appreciate and finally create well-developed and story-worthy characters as they use the Character Cards.

Students will learn how to find and strengthen and polish their own individual writing voice as they explore the "sound" of story.

56. **WHERE YOU'RE WRITING ABOUT** **Students will learn how to create realistic, sensory, tangible locations as they go through these lessons and use the Location Cards.**

65. **WHAT YOU'RE WRITING ABOUT** **Students will understand the construct of story as they study and practice the elements of well-constructed stories and use the Situation Cards.**

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Grammar is to a writer what anatomy is to a sculptor, or the scales to a musician. You may loathe it, it may bore you, but nothing will replace it, and once mastered it will support you like a rock. —*B. J. Chute*

In the *GP Creative* curriculum the basic elements of story are explored and experienced as students explore character, setting, plotting, emotion, conflict, and denouement. It will light a fire under the imagination, tickle the funny bone, and engender a positive passion for writing.

The GP Creative Cards: Genre, Location, Emotion, Character & Situation Cards offer students and teachers a dizzying, nearly infinite array of creativity-inspiring, plot-building, imagination-stirring ideas that will enable them to incorporate the concepts learned in the lessons and activities.

GP Creative is a creative writing course that is different. GP Creative believes that students learn to write by exploring the elements of story in depth and then by practicing what they've learned. Again and again. GP Creative offers tools in the curriculum and the cards that offer students literally hundreds of story ideas and the confidence and knowledge to begin their writing journey.

Plotting Plots

Objective: Students will learn to write creatively as they learn about the different types of plot.

Materials: Each student will need paper and pencil

GP Creative™

Cards: **LOCAtIOn** Cards

Present:

Plot: the main story. Aristotle divided drama or plot into three parts: a beginning, a middle, and an end. Of course it's what happens in between that gives us story; the plot should have begun long before the story does. Plot, regardless of length, usually contains the following elements:

   a) **Initial situation**; the first incident, event, issue, etc. that makes the story move forward. Nothing should happen at random; important characters should have an agenda of some kind.
   b) **Conflict or Problem**; goal or motivation the main character of the story has to achieve—or at least wants to. Plot comes from characters under adversity.
   c) **Complication**; obstacles the main character has to overcome. All plots need complications—no matter the genre. Complications arise from what has happened, is happening or is going to happen; a direct result of characters past, present or future actions.
   d) **Suspense**; point of tension, mystery, intrigue; device that arouses reader interest. This can (and should) happen in ANY type of story, regardless of the genre.
   e) **Climax**; highest point of interest of the story.
   f) **Denouement or Resolution**; what happens to the character after overcoming all obstacles/failing to achieve the desired result/reaching/not reaching goal.

Plot Types: There are three main **types** of plots: **Character-Driven**, **Plot-Driven** and **Story-Driven**. *(see Plotting Plots Devices)*

Exercise:

   1. Divide students into groups of 4-5 students.
   2. Each group will select (from *Plotting Plots Devices*) one **Plot Type** (character-driven, plot-driven, story-driven), one **Plot Device** and one **LOCAtIOn** card.
   3. Using one of the outlines from the *Outlining* exercise, individual students will identify the **Plot Type**, elaborate on their outlined story by adding a **Plot Device** (or more than one) and adding the **LOCAtIOn** chosen.
   4. Students should have a completely plotted, well-outlined story plan to move into the next exercise.

Purpose:

   1. Students should feel more comfortable with plotting and outlining their story ideas.
   2. Students should be aware of the differing types of plots and plot devices common in fiction.

Resource Material:
Following page(s)
Copy for students.

"The story is not in the plot but in the telling." —*Ursula K. LeGuin*

"Number one rule for fiction: Coincidence can be used to worsen a character's predicament, but never to solve his problems." — *Vivian Vande Velde*

Characterization: What's in a Name?

Objective: Students will learn to write creatively while they learn the importance of character names.

Materials: Each student will need paper and pencil

A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.
Romeo and Juliet —William Shakespeare

Present:

A fictional character is any person who appears in a work of fiction. Characters can be people, animals, or even inanimate objects. Characters are almost always at the center of fictional texts. And characters have names. What's in a name? Everything. Names make impressions, character names even more so. When naming your characters here are some things to consider:

a) Know your characters. Where do they live? *When* do they live? What is their role in the story? Occupation? Personality? Background? Ethnicity? Attitude?

b) Character names should *fit*; the focus should be on the character, not the really funky name given.

c) Know your genre. A sci-fi story would have different name expectations than a murder mystery or a romantic comedy story.

d) Try to avoid names that are difficult to read or pronounce unless there is a specific purpose. Avoid overly-unique names (or nicknames), again unless they have a specific purpose.

Exercise:

1. Students will write a list of names (at least 5).
2. Encourage students to "play" with the name types. Be creative with the "kind" of names they choose.
3. Next, students will assign an **occupation** and three **(3) character traits** to the names based mainly on the names themselves.
4. Encourage students to share lists. Write a few examples—given by students—on the board. Encourage students to "mix and match" names and traits.

Purpose:

1. Students should understand the importance of the names they give their characters.
2. Encourage discussion about how certain names seem to fit with particular occupations, traits, character types, etc.
3. Discuss how using a name that does not fit the "usual" category can create irony or complexity for a character type.
4. Discuss "famous" character names. Discuss how those characters might have evolved with different names. Discuss how some names can call up a specific idea or concept. (See suggested character names.)

Before Charles Dickens chose the name Tiny Tim for A Christmas Carol, he tried out Little Larry, Puny Pete and Small Sam. He also wrote several other Christmas stories, but none made it into print. —Prudential Magazine

Hannibal Lecter
George and Lenny
Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde
The Great Gatsby
Sherlock Holmes
"Alice" In Wonderland

Creatively Punk© Example:
Charlotte = housewife; obsessive-compulsive, irritating voice, wears big earrings | **Westcott**=bank teller, collects can openers, likes loud ties, hums | **Nate** = writer; is afraid of cats, has dandruff, is allergic to chocolate | **Thor** = stevedore, is afraid of the dark, has thing for *I Love Lucy* reruns, is lonely | **Dorothy** = secretary; is very shy, dreams of being an actress, is secretly in love with her boss.

Characterization: Character Arc

Objective: Students will learn to write creatively as they identify and create character arc.

Materials: Each student will need paper and pencil, and a copy of the *Character Arc* worksheet

GP Creative™
Cards: **GENRE** Cards

Present:
Character arc is the development, growth or change a character undergoes throughout the story or storyline. This change may be for the better, but it can also be for the worse or simply different. Character arc can happen in any genre. It can be sweeping and dramatic, subtle and small, even humorous and heartwarming.

Even if your character doesn't change for the better, the struggle is what counts. Reaching or failing to reach goals and reaction to conflict is what will make your story compelling. Character arc might involve:

- Emotional growth or destruction
- Attitude change/not changing
- Life choices
- Overcoming trauma/guilt/past mistakes/current mistakes
- Lack of something: courage, ethics, ability to love, control

Exercise:
1. Students will fill in the *Character Arc* worksheet.
2. Discuss the worksheet and the student's analysis of the different examples.
3. A volunteer student will then select a **GENRE** card (teacher, fan the cards facedown and have student choose one.) Announce the results to the class.
4. Again, choosing one of the characters created in the *What's In A Name* exercise, students will write a 4 paragraph (minimum) narrative, fulfilling the **GENRE** card requirements and showing character arc.
5. Students may continue with one of the characters developed or choose a new one.
6. Encourage students to share their narratives.

Purpose:
1. Students should understand and be able to create growth and change in their own characters.
2. Ask students to volunteer examples of character arc in movies, books or television shows.
3. Encourage discussion of how character arc adds depth and interest to storylines.
4. Encourage discussion of the difficulty (or not) of applying character arc to a short narrative.

Other literary possibilities for discussion:
Gone With the Wind —Margaret Mitchell
A Christmas Carol —Charles Dickens
The Stand —Stephen King
Star Wars (et al—movies)
When Harry Met Sally (movie)
Harry Potter, et al —JK Rowlings

Active vs. Passive Voice

Objective: Students will learn to write creatively as they identify active and passive voice.

Materials: Each student will need paper and pencil

Present:

In grammar the relationship between the action or state expressed by a verb, and its arguments (subject, object, etc.) can be passive or active. Passive voice may also be referred to as "telling" while active voice "shows" (see next lesson). When the subject is the one performing the action the verb is in the **active** voice. *The kid ate the sandwich* is active. *The sandwich was eaten by the kid* is passive voice.

While passive voice can be used for stylistic effect, such as when the character performing the action is obvious, unimportant, or unknown, active voice is **usually** preferable in fiction writing. Active voice will make your writing specific, interesting, and muscular. To keep things active:

- Search for the **overuse** of words or phrases such as: it is, am, are, was, were, has, had, have, been, to be, there is, there are, there was, there were
- Check to make sure the subject (or character) is performing the action
- Verbs are your most valuable tool when writing actively
- Stay in the moment whenever possible—or stylistically—feasible

Exercise:

1. Teacher, write the five passive descriptions (listed below) on the board.
2. Students will rewrite these passive phrases, using "active" voice. Encourage them to be as descriptive and imaginative as they choose.
3. Ask for volunteers to read their rewritten narratives aloud.
4. Discuss the difference between the passive and active descriptions.
5. Students will then select one phrase and fit it into a 4 paragraph (minimum) scene or narrative.
6. Ask for volunteers to read their narratives aloud.

Purpose:

1. Students should be able to identify active and passive voice in their own writing.
2. Encourage discussion of the impact each style had on the narrative.
3. Discuss when the use of passive voice may be necessary.

Teacher, write on the board

Passive Descriptions:
1. The tall man was a cop.
2. Zoe was a designer.
3. The child was a beast.
4. Brad was kind.
5. Julie was a snob.

"One of the reasons why bad novels are bad is not that the characters do not live, but that they do not live with one another. They read one another's minds through the author." — *V.S. Pritchett*

"All good books are alike in that they are truer than if they really happened and after you are finished reading one you will feel that it all happened to you and afterwards it all belongs to you: the good and the bad, the ecstasy, the remorse and sorrow, the people and the places and how the weather was. If you can get so that you can give that to people, then you are a writer." —*Ernest Hemingway*

Show And Tell

Objective: Students will learn to write creatively as they learn to show as well as tell.

Materials: Each student will need paper and pencil

GP Creative™
Cards: **LOCAtIOn** Cards

Present:
Don't tell us, *show us*. Showing means using vivid words, realistic descriptions, visceral emotions and compelling action. Make us *feel* your story. Showing dramatizes a scene in a story. Showing character emotions, motivations, goals and conflict through dialogue and description will make scenes vivid and believable. Remember, elements of story that are essential or important should be dramatized by showing. Showing can be done by:
   a) Revealing characterization/emotions/actions/reactions through dialogue
   b) Using the five senses when possible
   c) Using descriptive words, imagery (metaphors and similes) and detail

Exercise:
   1. Ask for a student volunteer to select 3 settings from the **LOCAtIOn** cards, (teacher, fan the cards facedown and have student choose one.) and write them on the board.
   2. Ask students to volunteer a "tell" statement for each setting; write on the board.
   3. Students will then select one setting and write a "show" paragraph.
   4. Encourage students to share their paragraphs with class.

Purpose:
   1. Students should understand the differences between showing and telling.
   2. Encourage discussion of the importance of both showing and telling.

GP Creative Example: Amusement Park: Tell statement. The carnival came to town the same time every year.
 GP Creative Example: Amusement Park: Show paragraph.
          The carnival showed up every year and left the very next day. Giant trucks carried rides of metal and steel, put together by big men in dirty T-shirts with tattooed muscles and toothpicks poking out of the corners of their mouths like snaggled teeth. The big men put the rides together like boys playing with the world's largest erector sets. There were booths full of games where you could shoot a gun, throw a ball, toss a hoop and win prizes too amazing to contemplate. And there were tents that held smells too huge to be contained; roasting hot dogs, buttery popcorn, frying sugary donuts, apples clothed in caramel jackets, clouds of cotton candy on a stick.
          Noise, noise, noise, lights and lights and lights; smells and sounds, flying high and falling fast and spinning and spinning and spinning. The stars sparkled brighter, the moon tried to compete with the neon, and a small town became something more, something real . . . something magic; the dazzle of cheap bulbs in rusting machinery, the din of shouts and laughter and cheaply won joy.

Good writers may 'tell' about almost anything in fiction except the characters' feelings. One may tell the reader that the character went to a private school (one need not show a scene at the private school if the scene has no importance for the rest of the narrative), or one may tell the reader that the character hates spaghetti; but with rare exceptions the characters' feelings must be demonstrated: fear, love, excitement, doubt, embarrassment, despair become real only when they take the form of events--action (or gesture), dialogue, or physical reaction to setting. Detail is the lifeblood of fiction." —*John Gardner*

"Don't say the old lady screamed—bring her on and let her scream." —*Mark Twain*

"If you tell me, it's an essay. If you show me, it's a story." —Barbara Greene

Location, Location, Location

Objective: Students will learn to write creatively as they learn to give depth and authenticity to their story settings.

Materials: Each student will need paper and pencil
A copy of the *Surroundings, Scenes and Setting The Stage: Excerpts*

GP Creative™
Cards: **LOCAtIOn** and **GEₙRE** Cards

Present:
Setting is the place and time where your story takes place. However, the location or setting you choose is **much more** than just the physical surrounding for your story; setting lends scene, background, drama and atmosphere. Setting should accent the theme, complement the characters, and provide a stage for the plot. Things to remember when creating a setting:

    a) What is the atmosphere? What mood are you trying to convey? How's the weather, the temperature, the *feel* of your setting?
    b) How do your characters *feel* about the setting? Happy? Scared? Confused?
    c) Use emotion in your setting, or contrasting emotions; such as a happy setting for a scary story or visa versa.
    d) How important is the setting or location to your story? Describe accordingly.
    e) How about some local color? Is your location well-known? Historical? Authentic?

Exercise:

1. Have students read the settings depicted on the *Surroundings, Scenes and Setting The Stage* sheet. Possibly have students read them aloud. Discuss the examples.
2. Ask for a student volunteer to select one setting from the **LOCAtIOn** cards, (teacher, fan the cards facedown and have student choose one.) and write it on the board.
3. Students will write a descriptive sentence fulfilling the *GP Creative™* Card requirements. This sentence should **simply describe** their setting.
4. Write a few descriptions on the board.
5. Ask for a student volunteer to select one **GEₙRE** card and write it on the board.
6. Next students will expound on their descriptive sentences by applying the genre from the card requirements and adding depth, emotion, even a character or two to the description of the setting.
7. Encourage students to share their paragraphs with the class.

Purpose:

Students should understand the importance of creating vivid, memorable, realistic settings in their writing.

GP Creative Example: Old House | Mystery
The old house was neglected and nearly hidden behind an old gate, the yard overgrown and abandoned.

The house stood back from the street behind a precariously leaning iron gate, rusted hands clasped protectively against witch grass and jimson, dandelions and hex grass trying to force their way in. It was a Victorian in the Queen Anne style at its most extreme; a cacophony of bewildering excess. There were large projecting bay windows, towers, turrets, porches, balconies, roof finials and crestings, inset panels of stone, cantilevered upper stories, acres of decorative trim, patterned shingles, elaborate brackets, banisters and spindles, even the chimneys were spectacularly crafted. Or at least they had been, once upon a time. Now the three stories seemed to have compressed with time, sagging on its foundation, bits and pieces of itself fallen away and lost. The brick was faded, once-crisp paint now tattered and peeling, windows—the ones left unbroken—were shuttered like a woman's eyes shying from a too-inquisitive gaze, the wraparound porch was listing, the front steps staggered, a mouth missing teeth, the peaked roof was as patched and tattered as an old hat. Margaret knew she had to have it.

WHAT YOU'RE WRITING ABOUT

In this section you and your students will be exploring methods to grab their readers from the first line, create believable and compelling conflict, introduce subtle back-story, cause suspense, brisk pacing, climactic surges and a satisfying denouement.

Students will become familiar with and learn how to:
a) Write truly terrific first lines or hooks that will hint at the story about to unfold, while inviting the reader to come along.
b) Create conflict. Every story, no matter the genre, plot or type begins with conflict. Conflict produces tension that makes the story begin; tension is created by opposition between the character or characters and internal or external forces or conditions. It is through conflict that the reader will come to care, empathize, cheer for or possibly despise your characters. It is what will keep them reading to find out how it all works out.
c) Keep their readers glued to the story as they deliver clues, histories and motivations through effective back-story without weighing down the action.
d) Keep their readers guessing as they introduce elements of suspense and anticipation in their stories.
e) Build their stories to an exciting climax, before finishing off with . . .
f) A satisfyingly satisfying denouement—or possibly an incredibly frustrating one.

"Conflict is the fundamental element of fiction, fundamental because in literature only trouble is interesting. It takes trouble to turn the great themes of life into a story: birth, love, sex, work, and death." —*Janet Burroway*

"The practicing writer, the writer-at-work, the writer immersed in his or her project, is not an entity at all, let alone a person, but a curious mélange of wildly varying states of mind, clustered toward what might be called the darker end of the spectrum: indecision, frustration, pain, dismay, despair, remorse, impatience, outright failure." —*Joyce Carol Oates*

"Conflict is inevitable, but combat is optional." *Max Lucade*

"Conflict is the gadfly of thought. It stirs us to observation and memory. It instigates to invention. It shocks us out of sheep-like passivity, and sets us at noting and contriving." —*John Dewey*

Something had to change, something had to give, he simply could not go on like this. He drummed his fingers, he tapped his toes, he fidgeted like a child awaiting a present he wasn't quite sure of. Then in sheer frustration he screamed, he howled, he railed! And waved his arms about wildly...which was how he knocked The Raven from its perch, thereupon upsetting the bust of Poe which knocked into The Oblong Box, upsetting the perfect replica of The Cask of Amontillado which tottered the stuffed Black Cat, banged against the plastic rendition of The Tell Tale Heart, disrupting The Gold Bug causing it to skitter across The Purloined Letter and ultimately caused his model of The Fall of The House Of Usher to . . . fall .
It had not been a good day. *The Man Who Would Be Poe* —*GP Creative™*

First Lines or "The Hook"

Objective: Students will learn to write creatively as they identify and then create interesting and provoking "hooks."

Materials: Each student will need paper and pencil
One copy of the *Famous First Lines* worksheets

GP Creative™
Cards: GENRE

Present:
"The hook", that mysterious mechanism that pulls us into a story, is usually the external conflict—or the situation—in which your characters have inexplicably found themselves. It's the hook that made the reader pick up the story or book in the first place, and if the writer has fulfilled their side of the bargain, it will keep them turning pages till the end. The best "hooks" occur in the very first line of the story.

In the opening line(s) of your story, your characters or situation should project a sense of urgency; this urgency will draw your reader into the story simply because your reader can identify with your characters and their problems on some level. The more universal the problem, the more quickly your reader will become hooked. A "good" hook should:

- Set the tone or voice for the story
- *Intrigue* the reader into the story
- Hint *strongly* at what is to come next
- Occur in the "middle" of the action
- Hint at (or come right out and state) an action, a problem, a surprise, or change

Exercise:

1. Students will complete the *Famous First Lines* worksheets. The goal is to match as many "*First Lines*" to the works and authors as possible (pages 69-71.)
2. Discuss the results. Teacher, reward the student(s) who identified the most "first lines."
3. Next, ask for a student volunteer to select a GENRE card, (teacher, fan the cards facedown and have student choose one.). Write the results on the board.
4. Students will then write a first line that fulfills the GENRE card requirements and sets the stage (narrative to be continued in the next exercise.)
5. Encourage students to share their "hooks" with the class.
6. Recognize particularly intriguing hooks. Did they make the reader want to know what happens next? Do they set the tone for the rest of the piece?
7. Encourage discussion of authors who created especially effective "hooks."

Purpose:

1. Students should feel comfortable with the concept of "hooking" their reader with the first line(s) of their stories.
2. Students should understand how effective a compelling hook can be.

"Three Rules for Literary Success: 1. Read a lot. 2. Write a lot. 3. Read a lot more, write a lot more."
—*Robert Silverberg*

Save This Exercise!
Students will continue this implementation with one or more contiguous exercises.

Suspense Anyone?

Objective: Students will write creatively as they learn to engender suspense in their stories.

Materials: Each student will need paper and pencil

GP Creative™
Cards: GEɴRᴇ

> There is no terror in the bang, only in the anticipation of it. —*Alfred Hitchcock*

Present:
Suspense: *Uncertainty*; the state or condition of being unsure or in doubt about something; *enjoyable tension*: a feeling of tense excitement about how something will end; *anxiety*: state of anxiety or intense worry about something.

Suspense is an aspect of nearly all types of fiction, everything from the sweetest kid's book to the most gripping techno-thriller. Yes, you really can create suspense without creaking floorboards and a dark and stormy night. It's all about *what happens next?* First you have to:
- Give your readers characters they can care—even worry about
- Keep your characters—and your reader—in the dark/don't reveal too much too soon/avoid *fait accompli* situations
- Create realistic and seemingly impossible-to-overcome obstacles
- Set the scene carefully/use description to set the mood
- Create foil characters (villains)/keep them subtle—or over-the-top horrible
- Foreshadow events—hint at things to come
- Keep your reader guessing. Will Rhett leave Scarlett? Will Ahab get the whale? Will the girl get the boy (or visa versa)?

Exercise:
1. Students will volunteer types of "suspense"—avoiding the obvious ones. Write them on the board.
2. Ask for a student volunteer to select one GEɴRᴇ card, (teacher, fan the cards facedown and have student choose one.) and write it on the board.
3. Next students will write a **scene** fulfilling the card requirements and using one of the volunteered suspense scenarios or a **Suspense Suggestion** or another of their own choosing. (This scene will be continued over the next two exercises.)
4. Encourage students to be creative in their creation of suspense.
5. Encourage students to read their scenes aloud. Encourage discussion of the different types of suspense. What made them suspenseful? Did the scene make them want to know what would happen next?

Purpose:
1. Students should understand how to create suspense in any genre.
2. Students should understand the **impact** of suspense in any genre.

Teacher, write on the board

Suspense Suggestions:
- Put characters on the edge of a cliff (metaphorically—or not)
- Place protagonist and antagonist in too-close-for-comfort proximity
- Create a deadline
- Solve one problem only to confront characters with a larger one
- Throw in an old fear or phobia
- Introduce a secret or two

> "One of the reasons why bad novels are bad is not that the characters do not live, but that they do not live with one another. They read one another's minds through the author." — *V.S. Pritchett*

> "The more matter-of-fact you are in your language and your treatment, the more goosebumps you can raise on your readers' skin without being tasteless." Graham Masterton

Save This Exercise!
Students will continue this implementation with one or more contiguous exercises.