

Book Reviews

Alan Maley & Sharoon Sunny, *Exploring Creativity Through Writing: A Handbook for Teachers*, Routledge, 2025, 236 pp., \$43.99, ISBN: 978-1-032-70246-9

Reviewed by Jayashree Mohanraj

A classroom is a vibrant place where several brains are at work constantly imparting, receiving, absorbing and creating. What is important in this environment is to stimulate and challenge the pulsating brains to perform well. This is true of both the teachers as well as the learners. A lot of collaboration, cooperation and interaction is required to stimulate creativity.

Creativity involves two features, (i) sensitivity, and (ii) sensibility. Creativity is inherent in all human beings. Many a time this dormant faculty needs a nudge to blossom. In the classroom the onus is largely on the teacher to kindle this faculty in young learners. Learners certainly show more interest in learning when they are challenged, and get involved in learning when they are encouraged to think differently. For teachers who have to be on their 'creative toes' all the time in the class it is a refreshingly energising factor.

This handbook for teachers aims to offer help to teachers towards fulfilling this task. In the words of the authors, "for the teachers, creative writing has had beneficial effects both on their own command of English and on their development of self-knowledge and self-esteem. For their students, the way creative writing encourages genuine self-expression in a non-threatening atmosphere has resulted in a more motivated attitude towards the language and a willingness to take the risks without which little real learning can take place" (p.viii). The handbook deals with writing poetry and short stories from among the various genres of creative writing.

The book has three parts. Part I is the introduction; Part II deals with creative writing, mainly poetry; and Part III has discussion and activities for writing short stories. In Part I, the introduction gives a research base to the project with review of books that address the use of creative

materials in the classroom. The authors discuss what is creativity and attempt a fairly well-structured explanation while conceding the fact that to define creativity is not very easy. They discuss various forms of creative works like drama, theatre, visual arts and so on. Such materials can spur imagination in learners to use language creatively. They discuss creativity by answering the 'wh' questions. They assert that the importance of using creative writing in language learning environment helps in developing a well-rounded personality of learners while the nuances and use of language are learnt. The discussion of how to implement creativity in language classrooms and the methodology adopted by some teachers give a context to the activities presented in the subsequent sections. The section also gives tips to teachers to create a positive environment and kindle creativity in the learners. Creative writings of well-known writers are discussed. The discussion of what obstructs creativity is helpful to every teacher, as they should be aware of these to help learners overcome the hurdles. Time-tested techniques like pair work and group work are suggested while engaging the learners with activities.

Part II of the book deals with creative writing with specific references to poetry. It starts with a discussion of what is poetry, the different aspects of poetry and types of poems. The authors' reassuring statement that poetry "is not necessarily a special kind of language. Rather it is a special way of using ordinary language" (p.74) gives a lot of confidence to the teachers as well as the learners to attempt the activities. The activities that follow cater to form-based as well as language-based tasks. The activities in this section follow a specific structure: aims of the activity, what should transpire before the activity, during the activity, and after the activity. Then comes the possible variations, followed by comments. The authors explain different forms of poetry with examples, to give a thorough understanding to the teachers who may not be well-versed in this aspect.

They also discuss what writing a particular type of poem does to the learners, like writing 'haikus' teaches discipline. The activities do not seem to be graded but the 'Variations possible' and 'Comments' sections allow the teacher to use the activities with different levels with suitable variations. This is in the true spirit of freedom that creativity gives to individuals. Time frame for each activity is not given, perhaps, again, it is left to the discretion of the teachers based on the level of the learners.