

CREATIVE WRITING COURSEBOOK

A Guide for Teachers and Students

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PREFACE

This coursebook has been developed for use in secondary and tertiary education, with the dual purpose of supporting students in the development of creative writing skills and providing teachers with a structured pedagogical framework. It is organized into eight units, each addressing a specific aspect of creative writing:

1. The Essence of Creativity
2. Writing with Emotion
3. Crafting Catchy Slogans
4. Writing Poetry
5. Modern Adaptations of Classical Stories
6. Editing and Revision
7. Story with a Plot Twist
8. Writing Dialogues

The units are designed to integrate theoretical concepts with practical application. Each unit begins with a thematic focus and is accompanied by activity sheets to guide students in practicing targeted writing techniques. These activities encourage the application of literary devices, critical reflection, and the gradual development of independent writing competence.

For instructors, the coursebook provides methodological notes and suggestions for lesson delivery, enabling adaptation to diverse classroom contexts and learning needs. The materials are intended to promote interactive, student-centered learning while maintaining academic rigor.

The overall objective of this coursebook is to foster creativity, enhance linguistic precision, and cultivate students' ability to produce original and effective texts. Through engagement with the units, students will gain both a theoretical understanding of creative writing and the practical skills necessary to apply this knowledge in a variety of literary and communicative contexts.

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UNIT 1: THE ESSENCE OF CREATIVITY

INTRODUCTION

Words are important. *'In the beginning was the Word'* John 1:1 and thus begins the story of creation. The saga of humanity, a variety of thinking and feeling persons, starts with our ability to speak to others and share life with them, through the medium of language.

LESSON AIM: (1) Get to know students.

(2) Exploration into creativity, genres and language. Describe elements and forms of creative writing.

ACTIVITY 1: GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Ask guiding questions to spark discussion:

- What kinds of writing do you like to do?
- What kinds of writing have you tried by yourself, outside of school or other English classes?
- What do you want to accomplish in this class?
- What kinds of writing do you think you could need in future careers?
- What do you want to learn or try in this class?
- What is your ideal writing environment?

ACTIVITY 2: WHAT IS CREATIVE WRITING?

Have students come up with definitions.

Creative writing is often defined as the writing of fiction, in which the author creates events, scenes and characters, sometimes even an entire world.

For the purposes of this course, 'creative writing' is any writing that expresses events and emotions in an imaginative manner and whose primary intent is to arouse emotions.

The overall intent of creative writing is not to inform, but to stir emotions, to elicit an emotional response. A storyteller's narrative is designed to express the storyteller's feelings about some aspect of life, and to engage the reader in those feelings. A poet uses events, images and people to deliver concentrated emotion. Dramatists and screen writers convey and stir emotions through action and dialogue.

ACTIVITY 3: LITERAL AND IMAGINATIVE LANGUAGE

Complete the following writing exercises on literal and imaginative language.

(a) Choose an object in your immediate environment, such as a glass of water, a knife, a chair, and describe it in accurate detail, using literal, informative language. Write for 5 minutes, then stop.

(b) Breathe deeply and slowly while you examine the object, and allow yourself about a minute to get a 'feel' for it. Set your clock or alarm for 15 minutes, and describe the object with feeling. Allow yourself to respond to the object in any way. Try to imbue it with feeling and character, but write realistically: the object is still the object. If a story develops around it, write that, but maintain your focus on the object. Do not change the writing once the 15 minutes are up.

Activity Sheet 1: The Essence of Creativity

INTRODUCTION

'In the beginning was the Word' John 1:1

ACTIVITY 1: GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Take part in the discussion by responding to the teacher's questions and sharing your ideas:

- What kinds of writing do you like to do?
- What kinds of writing have you tried by yourself, outside of school or other English classes?
- What do you want to accomplish in this class?
- What kinds of writing do you think you could need in future careers?
- What do you want to learn or try in this class?
- What is your ideal writing environment?

ACTIVITY 2: WHAT IS CREATIVE WRITING?

Try to come up with the best definition:



ACTIVITY 3: LITERAL AND IMAGINATIVE LANGUAGE

Complete the following writing exercises on literal and imaginative language:

- (a) Choose an object in your immediate environment, such as a glass of water, a knife, a chair, and describe it in accurate detail, using literal, informative language. Write for 5 minutes, then stop.
- (b) Breathe deeply and slowly while you examine the object, and allow yourself about a minute to get a 'feel' for it. Set your clock or alarm for 15 minutes, and describe the object with feeling. Allow yourself to respond to the object in any way. Try to imbue it with feeling and character, but write realistically: the object is still the object.

EXAMPLE TEXT A:

The object I chose evokes in us the feeling of Christmas. It is edible and sweet. It played a great role in Shrek. This small object is usually brown, or light brown. It has a smile, eyes, and buttons on its body. It has a human shape. It can be used for events or meetings; the object can be decorated in any desired way.

By Monika Kašparová

EXAMPLE TEXT B:

Okay, ginger bread man now you are ready. You were sitting in the oven for ages. What took you so long?! Now I don't want you anymore. You tried to make me feel fat, because you know I can't stop eating you. That's your fault for being so yummy. But you took your time, you took your turns, and now I'm done.

By Monika Kašparová



UNIT 2: WRITING WITH EMOTION

INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores how emotions shape creative writing and bring characters, stories, and poems to life. Students will learn to identify and express a wide range of emotions through language, imagery, and sensory detail. By connecting words to feelings, they will discover how to make their writing more powerful, authentic, and engaging for the reader.

LESSON AIM: To help students recognize, express, and apply emotions in their writing by using descriptive language and sensory details to create vivid and meaningful texts.

ACTIVITY 1: EMOTIONS

Divide the students into groups. Each group will work on one emotion. Their task is to list words associated with that emotion and identify a sensory detail that describes it.

1. Sadness:

Words: lonely, gloomy, heartbroken, hopeless, tearful, miserable, heavy, blue, downcast, sorrowful

Sensory detail examples:

- Sight: “raindrops sliding down a window”
- Sound: “a quiet sob in the dark”
- Touch: “a heavy weight on the chest”
- Taste: “salt from tears”
- Smell: “a room filled with stale air”

Sensory detail: the smell of rain on a white funeral ros; the smell of a perfume of beloved passed one

2. **Joy** - Sensory detail: a bright sun on a warm sunny day, the chatter of my loved ones talking
3. **Love** - Sensory detail: Christmas night with the family, a long warm gaze of a loved one
4. **Fear** - Sensory detail: a stranger following you on a dark night
5. **Anger** - Sensory detail: a kicked puppy, the smell of a burnt toast as a reminder of a morning argument
6. **Hope & Determination** - Sensory detail: watching sunrise
7. **Mystery & Curiosity** - Sensory detail: the sound of piano, the pictures of liminal spaces

See Appendix 1 for additional inspiration.

ACTIVITY 2: SHOW, DON'T TELL

Instead of stating emotions outright (e.g., I was sad), describe actions, body language, and surroundings that imply those emotions.

Example:

I was nervous.

My hands trembled as I tried to steady my breath, my heart pounding like a drum inside my chest.

Use the Five Senses: Immerse the reader in the moment by incorporating sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell.

Example: Instead of saying The bakery smelled good, try:

The warm scent of cinnamon and fresh bread wrapped around me like a comforting embrace.

Show me sentences prompts

Have the following 'boring' descriptions on slips of paper in a bowl. Have each student pull a sentence from a bowl. Each person writes a paragraph describing the situation in more detail—as much detail as they can, using the five senses and imagining what it would really feel like to see that person/place/thing. Instead of telling the reader, try to show the reader!

- The room was messy
- The car was a piece of junk
- The hallway was crowded
- The storm was scary
- The sunrise was beautiful
- I laughed really hard
- The old house looked creepy
- It was a bad meal
- It was a good book
- The party was wild
- The lake was ice cold
- The food was really spicy
- I was really sleepy
- The roller coaster was scary
- The backpack was overloaded
- I ran as fast as I could

- The kitchen was filthy
- The suitcase was really heavy
- The teacher was boring
- The cafeteria was a mess
- The old computer was very slow
- She was wearing an ugly sweater
- The substitute teacher was angry
- His sneakers were very old
- It was a gloomy day
- The table overflowed with food
- The locker was about to burst
- It was very windy outside
- The person was clumsy
- The road was bumpy
- The hill was really steep

Activity Sheet 2: Writing with Emotion

INTRODUCTION

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ACTIVITY 1: EMOTIONS

Work in groups. Each group will focus on one emotion. Make a list of words connected to that emotion, and then choose one sensory detail to describe it.

1. SADNESS:

Words: lonely, gloomy, heartbroken, hopeless, tearful, miserable, heavy, blue, downcast, sorrowful

Sensory detail examples:

- Sight: “raindrops sliding down a window”
- Sound: “a quiet sob in the dark”
- Touch: “a heavy weight on the chest”
- Taste: “salt from tears”
- Smell: “a room filled with stale air”

Sensory detail: the smell of rain on a white funeral ros; the smell of a perfume of beloved passed one

2. JOY:

Words:

Sensory detail:

3. LOVE:

Words:

Sensory detail:

4. FEAR:

Words:

Sensory detail:

5. ANGER:

Words:

Sensory detail:

6. HOPE & DETERMINATION:

Words:

Sensory detail:

7. MYSTERY & CURIOSITY:

Words:

Sensory detail:

ACTIVITY 2: SHOW, DON'T TELL

Instead of stating emotions outright (e.g., I was sad), describe actions, body language, and surroundings that imply those emotions.

Example:

I was nervous.

My hands trembled as I tried to steady my breath, my heart pounding like a drum inside my chest.

Use the Five Senses: Immerse the reader in the moment by incorporating sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell.

Example: Instead of saying The bakery smelled good, try:

The warm scent of cinnamon and fresh bread wrapped around me like a comforting embrace.

Show me sentences

Pick a slip of paper from the bowl—each one has a ‘boring’ sentence. Your task is to turn that simple sentence into a detailed paragraph. Use the five senses and your imagination to describe what the person, place, or thing is really like. Don’t just tell the reader—show them!

UNIT 3: CRAFTING CATCHY SLOGANS

INTRODUCTION

This unit introduces students to the creative power of language in persuasive and playful contexts. Through the use of puns, alliteration, and rhythm, students will explore how sound and wordplay can make slogans memorable and impactful. They will analyze examples, experiment with techniques, and finally create their own original slogans that capture attention and emotion.

LESSON AIM: To enable students to apply the techniques of pun, alliteration, and rhythm in order to create engaging and effective slogans.

ACTIVITY 1: CRAFTING CATCHY SLOGAN

Characteristics of a Good Slogan:

- Short & Memorable (E.g., "Think Different" - Apple)
- Unique & Creative (E.g., "Melts in Your Mouth, Not in Your Hands" - M&M's)
- Reflects Brand Identity (E.g., "Because You're Worth It" - L'Oréal)
- Appeals to Emotion or Benefits (E.g., "The Happiest Place on Earth" - Disney)
- May Use Rhyme or Alliteration (E.g., "Finger-Lickin' Good" - KFC)

What makes slogans effective?

= short, catchy, emotional appeal, rhyme, or wordplay

A. Puns (Play on Words)

A pun is when a word has multiple meanings or sounds like another word.

Example: "Time flies like an arrow; fruit flies like a banana."

How to use:

- Think of words related to your topic that have double meanings.
- Replace a common phrase with a similar-sounding word.

B. Alliteration (Same Beginning Sounds)

Repeating the same sound at the start of words makes slogans and sentences more memorable.

Example: "Snack Smart, Stay Strong" (A healthy snack slogan).

How to use:

- Choose key words and see if they can start with the same letter.

C. Rhyming & Poetic Devices

Rhymes make sentences more fun and easier to remember.

Example: "The quicker picker-upper" (Bounty paper towels).

How to use:

- Look for words that rhyme with your main topic.
- Use rhythm to create a catchy phrase.

Task:

- Assign Products: Give each group a different product (e.g., a sports drink, a smartphone, a chocolate bar, a shampoo).
- Brainstorming: Encourage them to list words that describe their product's benefits.
- Create Slogans: Have them come up with 2-3 slogan options.

Activity Sheet 3: Crafting Catchy Slogans

INTRODUCTION

This unit introduces the creative power of language in persuasive and playful contexts. Through the use of puns, alliteration, and rhythm, you will explore how sound and wordplay can make slogans memorable and impactful. You will analyze examples, experiment with techniques, and finally create your own original slogans that capture attention and emotion.

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Example: "The quicker picker-upper" (Bounty paper towels).

How to use:

- Look for words that rhyme with your main topic.
- Use rhythm to create a catchy phrase.

Task:

Work in groups. Each group will get a product (for example, a sports drink, a smartphone, a chocolate bar, or shampoo). First, brainstorm words that describe your product's benefits. Then, create 2–3 slogans for it.

UNIT 4: WRITING POETRY

INTRODUCTION

In this unit, students will explore poetry as a creative form of self-expression. They will experiment with different poetic techniques and structures that allow them to play with words, imagery, and rhythm. Students will create three types of poems: found poetry, where they transform existing texts into original works; acrostic poems, which use the letters of a word to shape meaning; and five senses poems, which bring experiences to life through vivid sensory detail. By engaging with these forms, students will discover how poetry can communicate emotions, ideas, and images in powerful and imaginative ways.

LESSON AIM: To guide students in experimenting with poetic forms and techniques by creating found poems, acrostic poems, and five senses poems, thereby developing their ability to use language creatively and expressively.

ACTIVITY 1: TRUE OR FALSE?

Write 'T' for 'true' or 'F' for 'false' after each statement.

1. Only 'poets' can write poems.
2. All poetry must rhyme.
3. Poems should be at least one page long.
4. Every poem should tell a story.
5. Every day has a poem in it, waiting to be written.
6. All poems should be unique.

ANSWERS:

All of the statements are FALSE, except for number five. That's right, every day has a poem in it, which you can write in any way you like. In this coursebook, there are different types of poems, but a poem is whatever you decide it is.

ACTIVITY 2: EXPLORING POETRY**1. Found Poetry**

Found poetry is poetry made up of words you find on a page – from a book, a newspaper or even from the back of a cereal packet. It's like a literary collage, where you discover meaning in unexpected places.

Found poems help you come up with images you would never have thought of.

Found Poetry Guide:**1. Choose Your Source Material**

- Look for interesting, vivid, or unusual language in newspapers, novels, song lyrics, historical documents, or even street signs.
- The best sources have strong imagery or emotional impact.

2. Select Words or Phrases

- Skim through your chosen text and highlight words or phrases that stand out to you.
- Don't think too much at first—go with what catches your eye.

3. Rearrange and Shape

- Organize the selected words into a poem.
- You can keep them in their original order (like blackout poetry) or rearrange them to form a new meaning.

Types of Found Poetry

- Blackout Poetry – Black out sections of a printed page, leaving only the chosen words visible.
- Cut-Up Poetry – Cut out words or phrases and physically arrange them into a new order.
- Erasure Poetry – Similar to blackout poetry but focuses on selectively removing words from a text to reveal a hidden poem.
- Centos – A poem composed entirely of lines from other poems.

2. Acrostic Poems

Acrostics are fun poems in which the first letter of each line spells out a word.

Dazzling,
Enchanted,
Celebrations.
Everyone
Merry.
Bright
Evergreens,
Resplendent.

You can also write longer lines.

Dazzling stars light up the darkness,
Enchanted sleigh rides through the snow,
Celebrations of winter starkness,
Embers in the fireplace glow,
Merry making across the land,
Bright packages encased in gold,
Evergreens stand tall and grand,
Regal and mysterious, valiant in the cold.

N.B. Acrostics do not need to rhyme.

Here are words you can use for an acrostic poem—they offer creative and meaningful themes:

IMAGINATION
WONDER
DREAM
ADVENTURE
HOPE
FREEDOM
MYSTERY
NATURE
CURIOSITY
STORYTELLER
DISCOVERY
INSPIRATION
PASSION

JOURNEY
HARMONY
CREATIVITY
TWILIGHT
ECHO
SERENITY
SHADOW
ILLUSION
WHISPER
INFINITY
REBIRTH
EUPHORIA

3. A Five Senses Poem

Read this example of a five-senses poem:

Autumn

Autumn is a silver star on a dark night,
It is a wild wind, whistling through the streets,
It is a new pair of gloves, snug and warm,
It is the smell of a bonfire, blazing in the dark,
Autumn is the first taste of apple pie, fresh from the oven.

Task:

Have students write their own poems.

Activity Sheet 4: Writing Poetry

INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will explore poetry as a creative form of self-expression. You will experiment with different poetic techniques and structures that allow you to play with words, imagery, and rhythm. You will create three types of poems: found poetry, where you transform existing texts into original works; acrostic poems, which use the letters of a word to shape meaning; and five senses poems, which bring experiences to life through vivid sensory detail. By engaging with these forms, you will discover how poetry can communicate emotions, ideas, and images in powerful and imaginative ways.

ACTIVITY 1: TRUE OR FALSE?

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3. Poems should be at least one page long.
4. Every poem should tell a story.
5. Every day has a poem in it, waiting to be written.
6. All poems should be unique.

ACTIVITY 2: EXPLORING POETRY

1. Found Poetry

Found poetry is poetry made up of words you find on a page – from a book, a newspaper or even from the back of a cereal packet. It's like a literary collage, where you discover meaning in unexpected places.

Found poems help you come up with images you would never have thought of.

Found Poetry Guide:

1. Choose Your Source Material (newspapers, novels, song lyrics, historical documents, or even street signs)
2. Select Words or Phrases: Skim through your chosen text and highlight words or phrases that stand out to you. Don't think too much at first—go with what catches your eye.
3. Rearrange and Shape
4. Organize the selected words into a poem. You can keep them in their original order (like blackout poetry) or rearrange them to form a new meaning.

2. Acrostic Poems

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3. A Five Senses Poem

Read this example of a five-senses poem:

Autumn

Autumn is a silver star on a dark night,
It is a wild wind, whistling through the streets,
It is a new pair of gloves, snug and warm,
It is the smell of a bonfire, blazing in the dark,
Autumn is the first taste of apple pie, fresh from the oven.

Task:

Time to get creative! Write your own poems inspired by what we've read.

UNIT 5: MODERN ADAPTATIONS OF CLASSIC STORIES

INTRODUCTION

This chapter invites students to revisit well-known myths, fairy tales, and classic stories, and to reimagine them in fresh, creative ways. By exploring how timeless narratives can be adapted to modern contexts—through changes in setting, character, perspective, or theme—students will gain insight into the flexibility of storytelling. They will practice blending tradition with innovation, learning how classical structures provide a foundation for new and original writing.

LESSON AIM: To encourage students to adapt classical stories into modern versions by experimenting with setting, character, and perspective, thereby strengthening their creative writing skills and understanding of narrative transformation.

ACTIVITY 1: COMPONENTS OF A GOOD STORY

Discuss with students what they already know about what a "good" story has in it.

ACTIVITY 2: MODERN ADAPTATIONS

Show students pictures and let them describe.

Here are some modern twists on classic stories that reimagine timeless tales with fresh perspectives:

1. "Cinderella" → Reality Show Star
 - Twist: Cinderella joins a reality dating show instead of going to a ball. She must navigate fake friendships, social media drama, and fame while trying to find true love.
2. "Little Red Riding Hood" → Cybercrime Thriller
 - Twist: Instead of a forest, Red is a teenage hacker delivering encrypted data to her grandmother, a retired spy. The "Big Bad Wolf" is a cybercriminal trying to steal her secrets.
3. "Romeo & Juliet" → Rival Influencers
 - Twist: Two social media influencers from competing families fall in love but must hide their relationship to avoid cancel culture and online hate.

Task:

Have students come up with their own adaptations of classical stories.

Activity Sheet 5: Modern Adaptations of Classic Stories

INTRODUCTION

This chapter invites you to revisit well-known myths, fairy tales, and classic stories, and to reimagine them in fresh, creative ways. By exploring how timeless narratives can be adapted to modern context—through changes in setting, character, perspective, or theme—you will gain insight into the flexibility of storytelling. You will practice blending tradition with innovation, learning how classical structures provide a foundation for new and original writing.

ACTIVITY 1: COMPONENTS OF A GOOD STORY

What do you already know about what a "good" story has in it?

ACTIVITY 2: MODERN ADAPTATIONS

Look at the pictures and describe the modern adaptation of the story. Explain how it is different from the original version in terms of setting, characters, or events.





Source: <https://tomwardstudio.com/>

Task:

Choose a classic story you know and create your own version—you can change the setting, characters, or ending.

See Appendix 2: Writing fiction handout.

UNIT 6: EDITING AND REVISION

INTRODUCTION

In this unit, students will learn how to review and improve their writing with the help of their classmates. They will practice giving constructive feedback, listening to suggestions, and using editing strategies to make their texts clearer, more accurate, and more effective. By working together, students will see how writing is a process of drafting, revising, and polishing.

LESSON AIM: (1) To develop the ability to give and receive constructive peer feedback.
(2) To practice editing strategies that improve clarity, style, and accuracy.
(3) To understand writing as a process of revision and refinement.

ACTIVITY 1: EDITING AND REVISING

Editing isn't just about correcting grammar and spelling mistakes; it's about improving the story as a whole:

1. Idea.
2. Meaning (semantics).
3. Organization (grammar).
4. Fine Tuning (formulation of utterances).
5. Have I Got It Right? (review and revision).
6. Eureka! (Text).

“ **Task:** ”

Have students share their stories and fill in the chart.

Activity Sheet 6: Editing and Revision

INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will learn how to review and improve your writing with the help of your classmates. You will practice giving constructive feedback, listening to suggestions, and using editing strategies to make your texts clearer, more accurate, and more effective. By working together, you will see how writing is a process of drafting, revising, and polishing.

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1. Idea.
2. Meaning (semantics).
3. Organization (grammar).
4. Fine Tuning (formulation of utterances).
5. Have I Got It Right? (review and revision).
6. Eureka! (Text).

Task:

Exchange your stories with a partner. Read their work carefully and fill in the editing chart with your feedback. Be specific and constructive, giving suggestions that can help improve the story.

Peer Editing Chart

Structure: Does the story have a clear beginning, middle, and end?	
Is the plot clear and engaging? Does the story make sense? Can you follow the time flow, the sequence of events?	
Does the imagery work? Can the reader visualize the scene, the moment?	
Pacing: Is the piece engaging? Is it alive all the way through or are there dead moments when the reader quits paying attention?	
Language: Is the language clean? Does it flow smoothly? Are sound effects such as rhyme, alliteration, and repetition intentional? Effective?	
Is the dialogue realistic and meaningful?	
Are there any awkward or unclear sentences?	
Are there overused words or phrases?	
Character development: Does the reader care about the characters? Are they sufficiently complex and developed?	
Is the story unique? Cliché is the universal deadener of creative writing. You must find fresh ways to say things, new stories to tell, or new ways to tell old stories.	

UNIT 7: STORIES WITH A PLOT TWIST

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, students will learn how unexpected turns in a story can surprise the reader and make narratives more engaging. They will study examples of plot twists, explore techniques for building suspense, and practice misleading the reader in clever yet believable ways. By planning and writing their own short stories with a twist ending, students will develop skills in pacing, foreshadowing, and narrative creativity.

LESSON AIM: To enable students to create short stories that incorporate a plot twist by applying techniques of suspense, misdirection, and surprise to capture the reader's attention.

ACTIVITY 1: READING

Have students read the stories and observe plot twists.

ACTIVITY 2: WRITING

Ask students to create their own stories with a plot twist using a **4-part organizer** in the activity sheet.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

1. Vocabulary Spotlight:

Have students highlight new or interesting words in each story.
Discuss meanings, synonyms, antonyms, and example sentences.
Turn it into a "Word Hunt" game — who can find the most expressive word?

2. Comprehension & Discussion Questions

Ask students to answer or create questions based on the story:

What is the main idea?

What do you think will happen next?

Why did the character act that way?

3. Role-play or Skit

Turn the story into a short scene or dialogue.

Assign roles and let students act it out, adding expressions and gestures.

4. Retelling or Summarizing

In pairs or small groups, students retell the story in their own words.

You can vary this: in present tense, from a different character's point of view, or in just 5 sentences.

Activity Sheet 7: Stories with a Plot Twist

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, you will learn how unexpected turns in a story can surprise the reader and make narratives more engaging. You will study examples of plot twists, explore techniques for building suspense, and practice misleading the reader in clever yet believable ways. By planning and writing your own short stories with a twist ending, you will develop skills in pacing, foreshadowing, and narrative creativity.

ACTIVITY 1: READING

Read the two stories and observe plot twists.

ANNOYING NEIGHBOR

I used to live in a small building downtown. One of the reasons I moved out was the bad neighborhood, including this guy in the apartment right over mine. It was a weird looking fella who mostly kept to himself. Around midnight though, there was frequently a strange noise that got on my nerves. It wasn't loud, to be fair, but I have really light sleep so it was hard to get my eyes shut with those little bumping sounds going on and on. It reminded me of high heels walking about, but not as loud, as if the person causing the noise was actually trying to be silent. After a few days, I realized the pattern was always the same, like a recording played over and over with random intervals in between. And that went on for the best part of a year, always the same sequence of bumps, slowly tattooed into my mind, sometimes for hours straight during the night.

It was only several years later, helping my daughter with her homework, that I learned a little bit of morse code. She knocked on the table with her knuckles and a shiver immediately went through my spine as I recognized that exact pattern. When I asked her what it meant, she laughed. "It's the easiest one, daddy" she said. "It's the one to call for help."



THE ESCAPED MAN

By C.T. Platt

The rain was falling heavily. It was like driving through a thick curtain of water. He eased off the accelerator a little. Had to be careful driving on wild nights like these. The last thing you'd want is to have an accident or a breakdown. You just want to be at home on these stormy nights. The thwack-thwack of the windscreen wipers was hypnotic. He stared out into the glow of the headlights. The rain sounded like white noise interference as it battered the car. He was reminded of the opening scenes of a Hitchcock film.

Through the wash of the rain he spotted a figure at the side of the road. The person wore a green parka and had their thumb jerked out. Why on earth would anyone be hitchhiking tonight? Surely you would just stay put until the morning. They must have been in a rush to get where they were going. He signalled down and pulled over. The hitchhiker climbed in. He shut the door quickly, glad to be out of the rain. He pulled his hood back and sighed. He was somewhere in his mid-twenties and had wild red hair and a thick beard.

'Awful night, eh?' said the driver.

The hitchhiker held his gaze for a long moment. Drops of rainwater trickled down his face.

'Yes. Yes it is.'

The driver pulled out and continued through the storm. The hitcher glanced over his shoulder into the blackness behind them.

'You okay?'

The hitcher simply nodded.

They drove on in silence for a short while. The BBC radio phone in blaring out from the car's speakers filled in for conversation. They listened to the radio and their own thoughts as they moved on.

'Where are you headed?' asked the driver.

'North.' The hitcher pointed.

'Are you travelling to visit friends?'

'Hmph.'

The driver couldn't tell if that was a yes or a no. He adjusted his tie nervously. The hitcher stared at him in his suit and tie. The hitcher seemed scruffy in comparison in his parka and Pink Floyd t-shirt.

'Do you work around here?' asked the hitcher.

'Yes.' said the driver. 'I was stuck late at the office. You know how it is.'

'No. Not really.'

Again they drifted into silence.

The talk radio show carried on as they drove through the wind and rain. The hitcher shifted in his seat and stared out the windscreen.

'No music?' the hitcher asked.

'What?'

'Is there no music we could listen to?'

'I like the talk radio shows. I'm not really a music fan.'

The hitcher's eyes glazed over for a moment. Then he spoke.

'I like listening to music. It calms me down.'

The driver said nothing.

Several miles later there was a news bulletin on the radio. The reporter tried to remain professional as she read the announcement.

'We are getting reports that a patient has escaped from a Manchester psychiatric institution. The man is said to be psychopathic and is said to have a history of murder.'

The hitcher jabbed a finger on the button on the radio panel. Tinny pop music blurted out from the speakers. The driver stared at his passenger, his question unasked.

'I hate the news.' answered the hitcher. 'It's so depressing. It brings me down. There is never any good news, is there?'

The driver did not reply.

'Don't worry. I'm not the killer' said the hitcher, fidgeting with his coat.

'No?' said the driver. 'I mean, no, of course you aren't.'

They drove on listening to the crappy pop music and over-excited radio DJs. The rain pounded on the car.

'What do you do for a living?' asked the driver.

The hitcher was quiet for a moment. Then he grinned.

'I'm a writer.'

'Really? How interesting. Have you had anything published?'

'No. As yet I'm an undiscovered artist.'

'I'm sure you will make it. What are you working on at the moment?'

'I'm writing a novel.'

'Yes?'

'It's about a serial killer.'

The driver did not speak. He flicked the talk radio station back on. A man was rambling on with himself about the change in days his wheelie bins were emptied.

'Where can I drop you?' asked the driver.

The hitcher said nothing. When the driver glanced round his passenger had his eyes closed. He was either asleep or feigning slumber.

They drove on through the storm down the snaking lanes.

An hour later. The storm still growled and raged. The hitcher looked out of the window, the driver steered the car, in silence.

Another news bulletin came over the radio.

"We're getting more information on the escaped patient. The killer's name is Simon Hughes. He escaped from the Green Pastures institute earlier this evening. He is extremely dangerous and completely unpredictable. Simon Hughes made his escape by changing from his hospital issue uniform into a suit and tie and pretending to be one of the medical staff. He stole a car and drove off.

The hitcher turned to the driver.

'What did you say your name was?'

'My name is Simon.'

The hitcher stared in shock. Simon grinned. The headlights of a passing car glinted off the knife blade in Simon's hand.

ACTIVITY 2: WRITING

Use a **4-part organizer** to create your own story with a plot twist:

1. Beginning/ Exposition – Who? Where?

Start with a solid story idea or premise that feels simple or straightforward. The key to a good plot twist is that it misleads the audience into thinking they know what will happen. Create a setup that is predictable enough to allow for the twist to be surprising.

Example Premise: A detective is investigating a series of mysterious disappearances in a small town.

2. Problem/ Build up – What goes wrong?

The story should focus on a mystery or problem that requires solving. Make sure to establish a clear goal or conflict early on to keep the reader's attention.

3. Climax – The top of an iceberg!

As the story progresses, add misleading or ambiguous clues that lead the audience down a certain path. You want the audience to form an idea of what will happen, but this idea should be incorrect.

4. Resolution and Ending – Plot twist: What changes?

The twist should be something that changes the story's direction in an unexpected way. Keep the twist hidden until the right moment, but it should also be foreshadowed in a subtle way. Look for moments where you can drop small hints or clues that can be reinterpreted when the twist is revealed.

The twist often works best when it involves characters who are hiding something or have an unexpected motive.

Reveal the twist in a way that shocks the reader but also makes sense in retrospect. The twist should reframe everything that came before it, and when the reader looks back, they should see how the twist was hinted at, even though they didn't notice it at the time.

After the twist, provide a resolution that wraps up the story while incorporating the change the twist created. You can either end on a positive or negative note, depending on the type of story you're telling.

UNIT 8: WRITING DIALOGUE

INTRODUCTION

In this unit, students will explore how dialogue brings characters to life and makes stories more engaging. They will practice using dialogue to show personality, create tension, and move the plot forward. Attention will also be given to correct punctuation and formatting of speech.

LESSON AIM: (1) To understand the role of dialogue in storytelling.
(2) To practice writing realistic and purposeful dialogue.
(3) To apply correct punctuation and formatting in written conversations.

ACTIVITY 1: WRITING DIALOGUE

Dialogue is about **demonstrating character through conflict, either internal or external**.

You need to see the scenario in your head clearly. This is essential to writing good dialogue. You have to know WHY the people who are talking to each other are talking.

Recommendations about writing convincing dialogue:

- Avoid phonetic spelling. Dialogue of the following sort—“Ah reckon ah don’ haff ta go dowan tuh th’ rivuh tuhday, ‘cawse we gots awl th’ feeush we gwine need”—gives the reader a headache. With dialect, less is definitely more. “I reckon I don’t have t’ go down t’ the river today, ‘cause we got all the fish we gonna need,” is much more readable and still suggests a particular character.
- Avoid goofy tags. “Really?” he ejaculated, or, “My God!” she blustered don’t do much for your credibility. If you have to have anything, use he said or she said. Frankly, most of the time you don’t even need that. Your dialogue, if you’ve been true to it, will speak for itself. I don’t object to the occasional he muttered or she whispered. I do always check in those sentences where someone hisses to make sure there was an “S” somewhere in the sentence he supposedly hissed. You just try hissing a sentence that doesn’t contain “S”s.
- Keep to the conflict. If there is no conflict for the two characters in a piece of dialogue, then the dialogue has no place in your story. The conflict can be internal (he’s lying to her, she doesn’t like him) or external (a wall of water is sweeping down on the two of them, someone has stolen her purse or their car). But it has to be there. Dialogue illuminates character faster than any amount of exposition, but only if you give your characters something interesting to talk about, and something that moves your story forward. And that means conflict.

- Remember that people breathe while speaking. Read your dialogue out loud, in your normal, conversational tone of voice. If you run out of air part of the way through a sentence, rework it. Add punctuation, break it up, rip out the flowery stuff.

“
Task:
_____”

THE SCENARIO:

A man and a woman who have been married for fifteen years meet on the sidewalk in their front yard as she is coming home and he is on his way out. The day is gray and blustery, with the smell of snow in the air and rapidly falling temperatures. She is dressed far too lightly for the weather. She was supposed to be home all day. He wasn't supposed to be home at all. One of them has to tell the other something important. The other one has to keep the first from finding out something important.

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Sit with your eyes closed until you can see these two people standing in front of their house. See where they're standing in relation to each other (near? far?), how they hold their bodies, the expressions on their faces when they surprise each other on the walk.

Remember that one of them has something to hide and the other has something to tell. You have to know what these two things are before you begin. The two things can be anything you like.

Remember that one is going to avoid telling the truth for whatever reason (and it may be benign or malignant), and the other may have a hard time saying what he or she has to say.

When you can see them, and when you can hear their voices, write for ten minutes. Do not use any words outside of quotes at all. This includes even 'he said' or 'she said.' Just let their voices come through.

Write the words as they say them—don't correct their grammar for them, or go back to change anything you have written. Don't cross out anything, don't erase anything—just let it all ride and force them to deal with the consequences.

Do not allow them to call each other by name.

When you have finished, sit back for a few minutes and cool off. Then read what you've written. You should notice a couple of things if you have really heard them talking. They'll interrupt each other, they'll change the subject, they'll change moods, and the whole thing will flow very fast. You should be able to tell just by what they say which is the man and which is the woman. You should be able to sense their lies or hesitations. Their moods and tones of voice should be apparent even though you have nothing outside of the naked dialogue to tell you how they say things. And you as the reader should have a few guesses about what they're hiding (though if you as the reader can't tell for sure, that's better than if you can.)

1. SADNESS & LONGING**💔 Melancholy & Nostalgia:**

- Melancholy – A quiet, lingering sadness (e.g., "She traced the edges of his old letters, knowing she'd never hear his voice again.")
- Nostalgia – A bittersweet longing for the past (e.g., "The scent of fresh-cut grass took him back to summers when life was simple.")

Words: wistful, faded, distant, yearning, ghostly, echo, lull, fleeting, murmur, dusk

Imagery: "A lone swing creaked in the empty playground."

Sensory details: the scent of old books, a song from childhood, the weight of an untouched chair

💀 Grief & Loss:

- Grief – Deep, overwhelming sorrow (e.g., "The house felt too big without her laughter filling it.")

Words: hollow, shattered, silence, vacant, dim, wan, tremor, wilt, ache, withered

Imagery: "Her voice cracked like an old record, skipping over the name she couldn't bear to say."

Sensory details: the chill of an empty bed, the taste of unshed tears, the smell of rain on funeral flowers

2. JOY & EUPHORIA**☀️ Happiness & Warmth:**

- Happiness – Lighthearted, content (e.g., "She twirled under the streetlights, the city buzzing with possibility.")

Words: golden, radiant, bubbling, twinkle, shimmer, glow, laughter, embrace, caress, rustle

Imagery: "Sunlight danced through the leaves, dappling her face with warmth."

Sensory details: the taste of ripe fruit, the hum of bees in summer, the fizz of soda on the tongue

⚡️ Exhilaration & Excitement:

- Exhilaration – A rush of excitement (e.g., "His heart pounded as he crossed the finish line, lungs burning, but victorious.")

Words: surge, electric, pulse, rush, soar, blaze, whoosh, bound, crackle, flash

Imagery: "Her heart drummed like a racing horse, hooves pounding against her ribs."

Sensory details: the wind slicing against skin, the scent of fresh-cut grass, the burn of laughter in lungs

3. LOVE & AFFECTION**❤️ Romantic Love:**

Words: smolder, lingering, velvet, whisper, blush, feverish, tender, stolen, entwined, sigh

Imagery: "Their fingers brushed, a moment so brief yet so infinite."

Sensory details: the heat of a gaze, the taste of wine on someone's lips, the tremor of anticipation

APPENDIX 1: EMOTIONS

👉 Familiar Love & Friendship:

- Familiar Love – Protective, unconditional (e.g., "She tucked the blanket around her child, pressing a kiss to his forehead.")
- Friendship – Loyalty, camaraderie (e.g., "They laughed until their stomachs hurt, the kind of laughter that made everything okay.")

Words: cradle, home, embrace, steadfast, heartbeat, gentle, familiar, anchor, warmth

Imagery: "His mother's arms felt like the safest place in the world."

Sensory details: the scent of baking bread, the feel of calloused hands, the melody of a bedtime lullaby

4. FEAR & ANXIETY

👉 Dread & Unease:

- Dread – A slow-building fear (e.g., "The hallway stretched endlessly, every step heavier than the last.")

Words: creeping, shadowed, hushed, prickling, looming, murky, whispering, unsteady

Imagery: "The silence pressed against her ears, thick and suffocating."

Sensory details: the metallic taste of fear, the skittering of unseen creatures, the itch of watching eyes

👉 Panic & Terror:

- Panic – Immediate, overwhelming terror (e.g., "His breath came in short gasps as the shadows closed in.")
- Unease – Subtle discomfort (e.g., "Something about the way she smiled sent a chill down his spine.")

Words: jagged, fractured, shriek, thunderous, pounding, chaos, rupture, frenzy, gasping

Imagery: "Her breath came in ragged bursts, her pulse a wild animal trapped in her throat."

Sensory details: the sting of cold sweat, the shudder of rapid breathing, the shrill scream of sirens

5. ANGER & RESENTMENT

👉 Rage & Fury:

- Fury – Explosive rage (e.g., "His fists clenched as fire roared in his chest.")

Words: blaze, seethe, snarl, spit, clench, erupt, crackling, venomous, scorching

Imagery: "His words hit like thrown stones, sharp-edged and bruising."

Sensory details: the bitter taste of bile, the sting of clenched fists, the scent of smoke in the air

- ❤️ Bitterness & Resentment:

- Bitterness – Lingering resentment (e.g., "She smiled, but the words tasted like vinegar in her mouth.")
- Frustration – Boiling impatience (e.g., "No matter how hard he tried, the words wouldn't come.")

APPENDIX 1: EMOTIONS

Words: sour, stiff, brittle, cold, barbed, grudging, smirk, hollow, jagged

Imagery: "She smiled, but it never touched her eyes."

Sensory details: the metallic tang of disappointment, the suffocating weight of unspoken words

6. HOPE & DETERMINATION

Optimism & Inspiration:

- Optimism – A sense of possibility (e.g., "She watched the sunrise, feeling like anything was possible.")

Words: dawn, rise, glimmer, unfurl, boundless, soaring, luminous, silver-lining, promise

Imagery: "A single flower pushed through the cracks in the pavement, defying the gray world around it."

Sensory details: the scent of fresh rain, the glow of candlelight, the soft hum of a new morning

Resilience & Strength:

- Resilience – Strength through struggle (e.g., "She wiped her tears, stood up, and kept walking.")
- Faith – Belief in something greater (e.g., "Even in the darkest night, he knew the stars were still there.")

Words: unyielding, steel, unwavering, tempered, grit, rooted, defy, forge, endure, phoenix

Imagery: "She wiped away her tears and stood, spine straight as an iron rod."

Sensory details: the sharp sting of fresh air, the solidity of clenched muscles, the pulse of determination

7. MYSTERY & CURIOSITY

Intrigue & Suspense:

- Intrigue – A compelling puzzle (e.g., "The letter had no signature—only a single, unfamiliar symbol.")

Words: cryptic, flicker, concealed, veiled, lurking, hushed, murmur, fleeting, clandestine

Imagery: "The envelope was sealed with an unfamiliar crest, the wax unbroken but full of secrets."

Sensory details: the rustle of unseen movement, the flicker of candlelight in a dark hallway, the cool touch of aged parchment

Wonder & Awe:

- Wonder – Awe at the unknown (e.g., "She stared up at the sky, the stars winking secrets only they knew.")
- Suspicion – Doubt and mistrust (e.g., "His smile was too perfect, too rehearsed.")

Words: ethereal, vast, boundless, shimmer, celestial, whispering, infinite, breathless

Imagery: "She stood at the edge of the world, watching the sky bleed into an endless sea of stars."

Sensory details: the cool touch of moonlight, the scent of pine and frost, the hush of wind through the mountains

Voice:

An author's unique style and way of saying things. You should be able to recognize an author's written voice the way you recognize a person's spoken voice. In creative writing, one goal is to develop your written voice. Your voice should come across as natural, clear, and consistent, as unique to you as a fingerprint. Wordiness, awkward use of language, awkward sentence structure, and lack of clarity all serve to muffle the voice of the author.

Characters:

The people or actors (e.g. animals, inanimate objects, forces of nature) who carry out the action of the story. Character development is the art of imagining and portraying characters in enough detail that they seem real both to the author and the audience. (Create character profiles: name, appearance, personality, dreams, fears.)

- The protagonist is the central character (person, animal, or personified object) in the plot's conflict.
- The antagonist is the force in conflict with the protagonist. It may be society, nature, or fate, as well as another person. It can also be the protagonist's own self, if he or she has an internal conflict.
- A character foil is a character whose traits are in direct contrast to those of the principal character. The foil therefore highlights the traits of the protagonist. The foil is usually a minor character, although if there are two protagonists, they may be foils of each other.
- A stereotype is a character who possesses expected traits of a group rather than being an individual. Using stereotypes is usually considered an indication of poor quality, especially in cases such as members of minority groups, people with disabilities, or women. However, stereotypes can be useful in furthering the story quickly and are acceptable in minor roles if they do not provide hurtful portraits of the groups in question.

Character development is showing the multitude of traits and behaviors that give the literary character the complexity of a human being. The amount of character development affects the quality of the story:

- A flat character is not fully developed; we know only one side of the character.
- A round character is fully-developed, with many traits--bad and good--shown in the story. We feel that we know the character so well that he or she has become a real person.

Character development is a continuum with perfectly flat characters at one end and very round ones at the other. Every character lies somewhere on this continuum. Round characters are usually considered an indication of literary quality. However, characters in folktales are almost always flat, and flatness is appropriate for minor characters in modern literature for children. A character foil is often flat, even if the protagonist is round.

APPENDIX 2: WRITING FICTION HANDOUT

The amount of change in a character over the course of the story also affects its quality:

- A static character is one who does not experience a basic character change during the course of the story.
- A dynamic character is one who experiences a basic change in character through the events of the story. This change is internal and may be sudden, but the events of the plot should make it seem inevitable.

A character may thus be round and dynamic, round and static, or flat and static. A flat character cannot usually be dynamic, because you do not know enough about the flat character to notice a change. If a character seems flat and yet seems to change, it is usually because the characterization is not well written.

Point-of-view:

The narrator's perspective on the characters and occurrences in the piece of writing. Whose voice is telling the story? Most fiction is written in first person, an eyewitness account, or in third person, where the narrator describes things that happened to other people.

Plot:

Plot is the sequence of events which involves the characters in conflict.

The sequence of events is called the narrative order:

- The most common type of narrative order is chronological. In this case, the events are told in the order they happen.
- A flashback occurs when the author narrates an event that took place before the current time of the story. The opposite effect is a flash forward.
- A time lapse occurs when the story skips a period of time that seems unusual compared to the rest of the plot. There is no standard amount of time that might constitute a time lapse; it depends upon the reader's sense that a longer than usual period of time has passed since the previous episode.

Conflict:

Conflict is the struggle between the protagonist and an opposing force. There are several types of conflict:

- Internal conflict, or person-against-self, occurs when the protagonist struggles within himself or herself. The protagonist is pulled by two courses of action or by differing emotions. This is often considered a characteristic of fine literature because it frequently leads to a dynamic change in the protagonist.
- Interpersonal conflict, or person-against-person, pits the protagonist against someone else.

APPENDIX 2: WRITING FICTION HANDOUT

- Conflict of person-against-society happens when the protagonist is in conflict with the values of his or her society.
- Conflict of person-against-nature takes place when the protagonist is threatened by an element of nature.
- Conflict of person-against-fate occurs when the protagonist must contend against a fact of life or death over which people have little control, such as death or disability. Some literary critics, however, see this conflict as a type of person-against-nature.
- Several types of conflicts may be present in any one story.

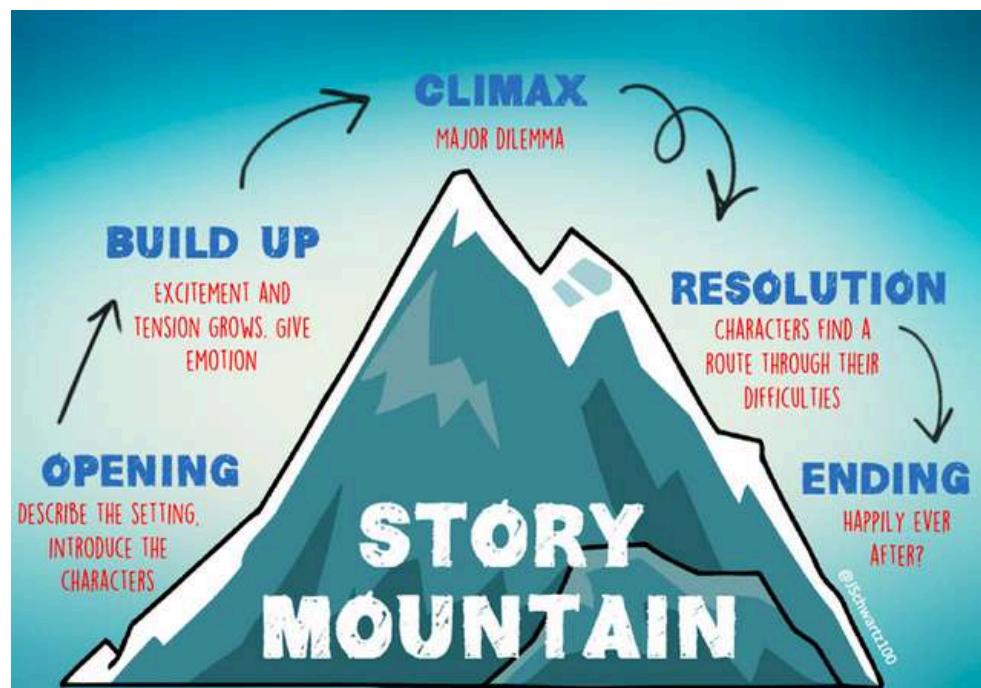
Structure of a story:

Most plots have certain common elements:

- Beginning: Introduce characters and setting.
- Middle: Build conflict and tension.
- End: Resolve the story in a satisfying way.

Use a story mountain (→ Rising Action → Climax → Falling Action → Resolution) to visualize the structure.

- A story commonly begins with exposition, an explanation of the situation and the condition of the characters.
- A plot usually begins with a problem which the protagonist must meet or solve. During the story, tension is built through a series of complications, incidents which either help or hinder the protagonist in finding a solution. This is the rising action.
- The climax is the peak or turning point of the action; at this point we know the outcome.
- The denouement or falling action is the part after the climax. It gives any necessary explanation and ends with resolution, the sense of at the end of the story that it is complete. The ending of the story may be either open or closed.



Source: <https://awakenenglish.com/2018/02/09/story-mountain/>

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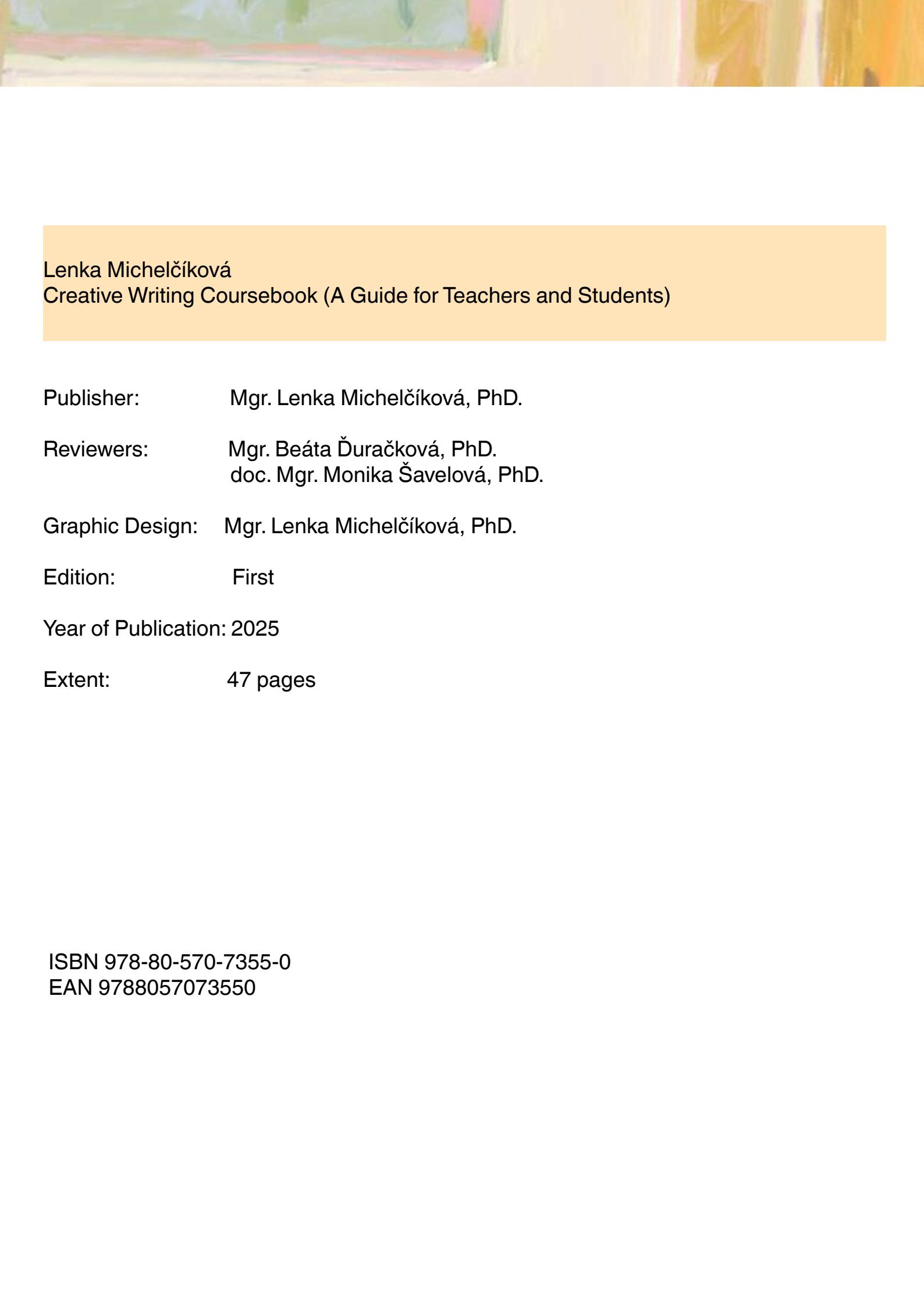
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Lenka Michelčíková

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A colorful, abstract painting of a landscape. In the foreground, there's a curved, light-colored shape that looks like a path or a road. To the right, there's a vertical structure with a pink and yellow pattern, possibly a building or a fence. In the background, there are green and blue washes that suggest trees and water. The overall style is loose and expressive.

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