



Creating Writers



A creative writing manual for schools
James Carter



**Also available as a printed book
see title verso for ISBN details**

Creating Writers

Creating Writers

A creative writing manual for schools

James Carter



First published 2001
by RoutledgeFalmer
11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by RoutledgeFalmer
29 West 35th Street, New York, NY 10001

This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2002.

RoutledgeFalmer is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group

© 2001 James Carter

The right of James Carter to be identified as the Author of this Work has been asserted by him in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988

All rights reserved. The purchase of this copyright material confers the right on the purchasing institution to photocopy pages 74–7, 83–5, 101–2, 109, 134, 138, 141, 151–3 and 177–87 only. No other part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission in writing from the publisher.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data

Carter, James, 1959–

Creating writers : a creative writing manual for schools / James Carter.
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. English language—Composition and exercises—Study and teaching (Elementary) 2. Creative writing (Elementary education) 3. English language—Composition and exercises—Study and teaching (Middle school) 4. Creative writing (Middle school) I. Title.

LB1576 .C3179 2000
88'.042'071—dc21

00–032214

ISBN 0–415–21691–5 (Print Edition)
ISBN 0-203-16049-5 Master e-book ISBN
ISBN 0-203-16052-5 (Glassbook Format)

For our daughter Lauren, with infinite love.
Thank you for bringing so much happiness.

Contents

<i>List of figures</i>	xi
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xiii
<i>Introduction: where do ideas come from?</i>	xvii

PART ONE Creative Writing Manual 1

1 Write from the start: ways to approach creative writing and writing workshops 3

<i>A positive writing environment</i>	3
<i>Feedback partners</i>	3
<i>Time to think</i>	4
<i>Freewriting</i>	4
<i>Workshop structure</i>	5
<i>Drafting and editing</i>	5
<i>Realistic expectations of the first draft</i>	7
<i>Process and product and portfolios</i>	8
<i>Ideas and notebooks</i>	8
<i>Ideas and good habits to get into</i>	10
<i>Versions of one idea</i>	10
<i>Stimuli for writing</i>	11
<i>Dictionaries and thesauruses</i>	11
<i>Publishing</i>	11
<i>Using word processors</i>	12
<i>Talking points</i>	12
<i>Writing for the reader in you</i>	13
<i>Enjoy yourself!</i>	13

2 Poetry 14

<i>A new way of seeing: some thoughts on writing poetry</i>	14
<i>What's poetry good for? Poets share their personal definitions of poetry</i>	15
<i>How do poems begin? Poets examine the ways in which their poems evolve</i>	16
<i>Masterclass: poets respond to questions often asked about writing poetry</i>	18
Growing poems	24
<i>Jan Dean – ‘Angels’</i>	24
<i>John Foster – ‘My Front Tooth’</i>	27
<i>– ‘The Snow Monster’</i>	30
<i>– ‘Goran’</i>	32

Roger McGough – ‘Rabbit in Mixer Survives’ 34
 – ‘The Cats’ Protection League’ 38
 Tony Mitton – ‘Little Red Rap’ 42
 – ‘Green Man Lane’ 47
 – ‘Rainforest Song’ 51
 Brian Moses – ‘Lost Magic’ 54
 Andrew Fusek Peters – ‘Fire at Night’ 57
 Poetry workshops 59
 Poetry word wheel 73
 Poetry beginnings (worksheet) 75
 Poetry checklist (worksheet) 76
 Poetry glossary (worksheet) 77

3 Fiction

78

Facts behind fictions: initial discussion points on writing prose fiction 78
Planning for fiction: ideas on brainstorming and planning for writing 80
Brainstorming (worksheet) 83
Story mapping 1 (worksheet) 84
Story mapping 2 (worksheet) 85
Growing fiction 86
 Malorie Blackman – Pig-heart Boy 86
 Morris Gleitzman – Bumface 91
 Short stories (including David Almond’s advice) 96
 Beginnings and endings 97
 Story beginnings (worksheet) 101
 Characters: writing about fictional people 103
 Invent your own character (worksheet) 109
 Dialogue: the role of speech in stories 110
 Drama (including Terry Deary – The Mad Millennium; Jacqueline Wilson – The Dare Game) 113
 Narration and point of view: writing in the first and third person 125
 Places and descriptive writing 128
 Places: snapshots (worksheet) 134
 Plot: a sequence of events 135
 Plot overviews (worksheet) 138
 Picture this (worksheet) 141
 Suspense and atmosphere: engaging the reader 142
 Fiction workshops 145
 Fiction word wheel 150
 Fiction checklist (worksheet) 152
 Fiction glossary (worksheet) 153

4 Non-fiction

154

Creative with the truth: ways into writing non-fiction 154
 Nick Arnold – Bulging Brains and the Horrible Science series 159
 Terry Deary – The Woeful Second World War and the Horrible Histories series 166
 Non-fiction workshops 171
 Start with the facts: space (worksheet) 177

<i>Start with the facts: the wolf (worksheet)</i>	179
<i>Historical fiction (worksheet)</i>	181
<i>Journalism (worksheet)</i>	183
<i>Letter writing (worksheet)</i>	184
<i>Painting animals with words (worksheet)</i>	185
<i>Travel writing (worksheet)</i>	186
<i>Non-fiction glossary (worksheet)</i>	187

PART TWO Author Visit Guide	189
5 Author case studies	191
<i>Malorie Blackman (novelist and screenwriter: library visit)</i>	191
<i>Anthony Masters (novelist and screenwriter: secondary school workshop)</i>	195
<i>Brian Moses (poet: three-day primary school residency)</i>	201
<i>Andrew Fusek Peters (poet: secondary school visit)</i>	210
<i>Celia Rees (novelist: secondary school visit)</i>	220
<i>Jacqueline Wilson (novelist: university talk to undergraduate primary teachers)</i>	224
6 Arranging an author visit	230
<i>Author visits to schools</i>	230
<i>Funding and costs</i>	231
<i>Forms of events and visitors</i>	231
<i>Extra activities</i>	232
<i>Special events in the calendar</i>	232
<i>Preparations before the visit</i>	233
<i>Arrangements during the visit</i>	237
<i>Activities after the visit</i>	238
<i>Arranging an author visit: checklist</i>	240
Appendix: Further information on creative writing	241
<i>Competitions: children's own writing</i>	241
<i>Reference texts and further reading</i>	242
<i>Bibliography</i>	243
<i>Selected current titles from all featured authors</i>	243

Figures

1.1	Manuscript page for David Almond's novel <i>Skellig</i>	6
2.1	Manuscript page for Roger McGough's poem 'The Cats' Protection League'	41
2.2	Manuscript page for Tony Mitton's poem 'Little Red Rap'	44
2.3	Peter Bailey's Green Man illustration for Tony Mitton's book <i>Plum</i>	46
2.4	Poetry word wheel: adjectives, nouns and verbs	74
3.1	Story mapping notes made by David Almond	81
3.2	Cover of Malorie Blackman's novel <i>Pig-heart Boy</i>	86
3.3	Cover of Morris Gleitzman's novel <i>Bumface</i>	92
3.4	Manuscript page for <i>Bumface</i>	93
3.5	Cover of Terry Deary's play <i>The Mad Millennium</i>	115
3.6	Cover of Jacqueline Wilson's novel <i>The Dare Game</i>	118
3.7	Manuscript page for the play <i>The Dare Game</i>	119
3.8	Manuscript page for the novel <i>The Dare Game</i>	120
3.9	Photograph of beach by Rob Vincent	134
3.10	Photograph of city at night by Rob Vincent	134
3.11	Photograph of cottage by Rob Vincent	134
3.12	Illustration by Jilly Wilkinson of a startled horse	141
3.13	Illustration by Peter Bailey of a man being attacked by dogs	141
3.14	Illustration by Ian Beck of an air balloon in a snow storm	141
3.15	Fiction word wheel: people, places and situations	151
4.1	Cover of Nick Arnold's book <i>Bulging Brains</i>	159
4.2	Manuscript page of rough notes for <i>Bulging Brains</i>	161
4.3	'Bet you never knew!', from <i>Bulging Brains</i>	162
4.4	Cover of Terry Deary's book <i>The Woeful Second World War</i>	166
4.5	'Miaow did she do that?', from <i>The Woeful Second World War</i>	168
4.6	'Czechoslovakia today', from <i>The Woeful Second World War</i>	169
5.1	Malorie Blackman	191
5.2	Anthony Masters	195
5.3	Brian Moses	201
5.4	Andrew Fusek Peters	210
5.5	Celia Rees	220
5.6	Jacqueline Wilson	224

Acknowledgements

We are most grateful for permission given to reproduce extracts, illustrations or materials from the following.

PETER ABBS AND JOHN RICHARDSON

The Forms of Narrative – reproduced by permission of Cambridge University Press.

DAVID ALMOND

Skellig – reproduced by permission of Hodder & Stoughton Limited.

NICK ARNOLD

Bulging Brains (Scholastic)

PETER BAILEY

Rough illustration for Philip Pullman's *Clockwork* (Transworld)

Illustration of Green Man from Tony Mitton's *Plum* (Scholastic)

IAN BECK

Illustration © Ian Beck 1993. Taken from *Tom and the Island of Dinosaurs* by Ian Beck, published by Doubleday, a division of Transworld Publishers. All rights reserved.

MALORIE BLACKMAN

© Oneta Malorie Blackman 1997. Extracted from *Pig-heart Boy* by Malorie Blackman, published by Doubleday, a division of Transworld Publishers. All rights reserved.

© Oneta Malorie Blackman 1999. Extracted from *Dangerous Reality* by Malorie Blackman, published by Doubleday, a division of Transworld Publishers. All rights reserved.

© Oneta Malorie Blackman 1995. Extracted from *Thief!* by Malorie Blackman, published by Doubleday, a division of Transworld Publishers. All rights reserved.

MELVIN BURGESS

Cry of the Wolf by Melvin Burgess – first published by Andersen Press.

Also published by Puffin.

JAMES CARTER

'Tear' – first published by Hodder Wayland.

'The River' – first published by Heinemann.

'Electric Guitars' – first published by Macmillan.

HELEN CRESSWELL

The Bogleweed by permission of Oxford University Press.

The Piemakers by permission of Oxford University Press.

The Night-Watchmen and *Snatchers* – reproduced by permission of Hodder & Stoughton Limited.

GILLIAN CROSS

The Demon Headmaster by permission of Oxford University Press.
Wolf by permission of Oxford University Press.

JAN DEAN

‘Angels’ from *A Mean Fish Smile: Sandwich Poets Volume 4* (Macmillan)

TERRY DEARY

Mad Millennium – play script (Scholastic)
The Woeful Second World War (Scholastic)
The Lady of Fire and Tears (Orion Children’s Books)

BERLIE DOHERTY

Dear Nobody (Hamish Hamilton, 1991) reproduced by permission of Penguin Books Ltd.

JOHN FOSTER

‘My Front Tooth’
‘Goran’
‘The Snow Monster’
‘Grandma’
from *Making Waves* (Oxford University Press)
First three lines of ‘Mrs. Nugent’s Budgie’ from *Standing on the Sidelines* (Oxford University Press)
All reproduced by permission of Oxford University Press.

JAMILA GAVIN

Out of India (Pavilion)

MORRIS GLEITZMAN

Bumface (Penguin Books Australia Ltd)
Water Wings (Macmillan)

JANNI HOWKER

Extract from *Badger on the Barge* © 1984 Janni Howker. Reproduced by permission of the publisher Walker Books Ltd, London.

ROGER MCGOUGH

‘The Cats’ Protection League’ from *Bad, Bad Cats* (Puffin)
‘Rabbit in Mixer Survives’ from *Selected Poems 1967–1987* (Jonathan Cape)

ANTHONY MASTERS

From the book *Dark Side of the Brain* by Anthony Masters (published by Bloomsbury 1997)
Ghost Blades (Egmont)

TONY MITTON

‘Little Red Rap’ from *Big Bad Raps* (Orchard)
‘Green Man Lane’, ‘Rainforest Song’, ‘Nits’ from *Plum* (Scholastic)
‘Bathroom’

BRIAN MOSES

‘Letter from a Soldier’ from *Stories from the Past* – compiled by Brian Moses (Scholastic)
 ‘Lost Magic’ from *Barking Back at Dogs!* (Macmillan)

ANDREW FUSEK PETERS

‘When I Come to the Dark Country’ from *The Weather’s Getting Verse* (Sherbourne Publications)
 ‘Unevensong’ from *Poems with Attitude* (Hodder Wayland)
 ‘Fire at Night’

CELIA REES

Blood Sinister (Scholastic)

MICHAEL ROSEN

‘Down Behind the Dustbin’ from *You Tell Me* by Michael Rosen and Roger McGough, published by Puffin. Reproduced by permission of Peters, Frazer & Dunlop literary agency.

NICK SHARRATT

Cover illustration © Nick Sharratt. Taken from *The Dare Game* by Jacqueline Wilson, published by Doubleday, a division of Transworld Publishers.

NORMAN SILVER

‘Snap, Crackle, Pop’ from *The Walkmen Have Landed* (Faber & Faber)

ROB VINCENT

Three photographs in ‘Fiction’ chapter.

JILLY WILKINSON

Artwork for Norman Silver’s *The Blue Horse* (Faber & Faber)

BENJAMIN ZEPHANIAH

‘I Luv Me Mudder’

Every effort has been made to trace all copyright holders. In the event of any queries please contact RoutledgeFalmer, London.

Introduction

Where *do* ideas come from?

When the children's author Philippa Pearce went to Buckingham Palace to collect her OBE, the Queen asked her, 'Where do you get your ideas from?' – to which the author replied, 'Harrods, Ma'am'. Whether this anecdote – borrowed from Philip Pullman – is entirely true or not hardly matters for it delightfully proves that it is an impossible question to respond to with any certainty, except perhaps with the answer:

Anywhere and everywhere.

Above all else, it is the aim of this book to empower children to discover this very answer for themselves.

Many authors feel that, to an extent, ideas are the easy part. It is what you do with them that counts. So this book sets out to show what popular and established children's writers do with their ideas and how they grow and develop them into fully fledged poems, stories, novels, plays and information books.

The material in *Creating Writers* comes from a variety of sources. Some of the author quotes stem from interviews conducted especially for this book; some material comes from public talks, performances or writing workshops. Other quotes derive from my book of interviews, *Talking Books* (Routledge). In all cases, full permission has been granted to use the material.

The main part of *Creating Writers* is a Creative Writing Manual, and covers poetry, fiction and non-fiction. The ideas, advice, activities and models of writing featured are provided by a variety of contemporary children's authors, and offer teachers contexts and opportunities in which they can help enable young writers to

- enjoy and explore their own creativity
- express themselves in a range of literary forms and genres and for many purposes and audiences
- reflect upon the craft and process of writing
- engage with and respond imaginatively to the text of others
- consider the elements of narrative, such as dialogue, characterisation, place and plot
- consider the elements of poetry, such as rhythm and rhyme, alliteration and assonance
- perceive themselves as members of a writing community.

The authors represented here were chosen because they each had something invaluable to contribute in terms of passing on advice about creative writing to young people, in terms of sharing their writing methods and of talking about the wealth of experience they have had in schools as writing workshop leaders. Extracts are taken from their texts that are not only relevant and accessible to Key Stage 3/Upper Key Stage 2 but also prevalent and popular resources in primary and secondary schools. It is for these reasons that there are two Scholastic

‘Horrible’ series (*Horrible Histories* by Terry Deary and *Horrible Science* by Nick Arnold) in the ‘Non-fiction’ chapter. These award-winning series serve as useful models from which young writers can produce their own non-fiction text.

The Creative Writing Manual part of *Creating Writers* could be used in one of two ways – either as an entire creative writing course to be followed through from start to finish or alternatively as an ‘off the shelf’ source book for ad hoc writing activities. The manual has been written, where possible, in accessible, everyday language in order that it can be used with Key Stage 3 and Upper Key Stage 2 pupils. Teachers will observe that the majority of the material is pitched directly at – and could be read aloud to – the pupils.

None of the workshop activities presented in this book are set in stone. Teachers are encouraged to view these resources as starting points to be adopted and adapted according to the varying needs of classes, writing environments and individuals. Indeed, a number of the workshop ideas that appear in this book have been used with adults as well as primary and secondary age children, and have been adjusted to suit the ages, ability levels and interests of the writers.

The Author Visit Guide, the second part of this book, features ‘Author case studies’ of visits conducted by six children’s writers – Malorie Blackman, Anthony Masters, Brian Moses, Andrew Fusek Peters, Celia Rees and Jacqueline Wilson. In each case study, one visit is reported in detail. In some of the case studies, the authors reflect upon visiting schools and libraries, performing their work, conducting workshops and meeting their readers. Workshop activities reported and discussed in this section could serve as further starting points for classroom literacy activities and workshops.

In the ‘Arranging an author visit’ chapter, detailed advice is given on initiating and organising author events. Examples are also provided of the wide range of literacy-based activities that can be undertaken before and after author visits.

Acknowledgements

Creating Writers has been a most exciting and rewarding project in which I have met many generous and inspirational people who were only too willing to give up so much of their precious time. I wish to thank all of them for helping me to assemble this book. I am most grateful to all of the authors for inviting me into their homes and offices, for talking with me, for digging up old manuscripts and for revising the interview transcripts. Please refer to ‘Selected current titles’ (pp. 243–62) for lists of children’s books available by these authors.

I wish to thank the illustrators Peter Bailey and Jilly Wilkinson for once again allowing me to reproduce their artwork. Ian Beck deserves a very special word of thanks – for his unfailing commitment to this project, his warm and congenial support and the truly excellent artwork he has provided for the cover. Thanks must also go to Rob Vincent for his wonderful photographs and to Ken Bentley for his technical wizardry in designing the word wheels.

I thank Malorie Blackman, Anthony Masters, Brian Moses, Andrew Fusek Peters and Celia Rees for allowing me to shadow them during their visits to schools and also Jacqueline Wilson for taking time out of her hectic schedule to visit my own writing class at Reading University; a transcript of Jacqueline’s talk is reproduced in the Author Visit Guide. Thanks must also go to the staff at all of the schools I visited – and especially Anne Newman (Farmor’s School), Maggie Moorhouse (Stoke Park School), Graham Macarthur (St John’s Church of England School), Angie Burroughs (The Weald School) and Vicky Fox (Bedfordshire Libraries) – for their overwhelming help and interest. I am most grateful to the pupils from these schools for

allowing me to reproduce their workshop ideas, poems and stories. I must highlight the fact that all of the material in this text – from child or adult, professional or otherwise – has been donated without charge. I am genuinely touched by the generosity of each and every contributor.

Talking Books, my previous title for RoutledgeFalmer, had just one editor. For various reasons, with *Creating Writers* I have had the good fortune to have had three – Jude Bowen, Nina Stibbe and also Helen Fairlie (now formerly of Routledge) – whose adept nurturing helped me to establish and shape the project at the outset. To all three of them I extend my warmest gratitude – for their invaluable input and insight throughout the production of this book. Finally I wish to thank a few more people who have given much time and energy to this book – Michael Lockwood (Reading University), Alice McLaren (formerly of Puffin), Naomi Cooper and Kate Giles (Transworld), Nancy Cooper (Hodder), Nyree Jagger (Scholastic) – and also my brilliant wife, Sarah, for all her love and understanding and for bringing us our wonderful daughter, Lauren.

James Carter