



# Creating Writers: a creative writing manual for schools

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How are writers made? In this companion to **Talking Books**, James Carter provides excellent guidance for teachers who are keen to support the developing authorship of their students. **Creating Writers** includes sections on writing workshops, poetry, fiction, non-fiction and making the most of author visits. A great strength of this guide is the wisdom provided through authors' introspective accounts of creative processes, and the sample plans and manuscripts that exemplify ways of working. For example, on planning, Morris Gleitzman notes: 'I plan my books out on the computer and I write notes about each chapter of the novel. I do many drafts of that chapter plan.' While Philip Pullman says: 'I find that when I do plan a story it goes dead on me, so I have to keep some of it unknown. Otherwise I lose the curiosity that pulls me through.' On narration, Berlie Doherty explains that a first person narration helps her to get to know her characters, while Philip Pullman prefers the third person: 'because I like swooping in and drawing back, and giving a panoramic view -- in the same way a film camera does.' These perspectives indicate that there is no single route to becoming a good writer, no routine or ritual that needs to be slavishly adhered to. Rather the apprentice learns from the master craftsman and through imitation, experimentation and reflection finds a distinctive voice and style. There are implications for teachers' engagement in creative writing; those who write alongside their pupils will be best placed to scaffold development. Technical aspects of language are important in that they serve the writer's intentions and the desire to create meaning. The authors profiled in this book discuss the importance of developing a personal vocabulary and highlight the need for effective punctuation. Each section concludes with a collection of workshop starters. Many of these exercises are thoughtfully designed to help young writers explicitly examine the effects created by particular uses of language. They will be most effective if adapted and embedded in a well-planned writing curriculum rather than used as quick fillers. Overall an invaluable guide that will inspire students, teachers and also those interested in writing for children. I for one couldn't wait to pick up my pen!

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