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The Psychology of Creative Writing

Marie J.C. Forgeard, Scott Barry Kaufman, and James C. Kaufman

Approximately 3 billion books are sold each year in the United States, and more than a quarter of the population reports reading more than 15 books per year (Ipsos 1). The work of creative writers – including novelists, poets, playwrights, screenwriters, and sitcom writers – has a significant impact on our lives. Not surprisingly, creative writers elicit much curiosity from their audience. Freud had already noted that "We laymen have always been intensely curious to know . . . from what source that strange being, the creative writer, draws his material, and how he manages to make such an impression on us with it, and to arouse in us emotions of which, perhaps, we had not even thought ourselves capable" (Freud 36).

To further stimulate our curiosity, Freud noted that when asked, writers often give no explanation, or no good explanation, for their creative behavior – shrouding the creative writing process in an intriguing veil of mystery. The seemingly mysterious nature of creative writing may at least partially explain the relative lack of scientific attention this central human activity has garnered from psychologists. As noted by Sternberg, "creativity has been relatively little studied in psychology, creative writing even less so" (xv). Given the importance of writing in our daily lives, why haven't psychologists attempted to pierce the mystery and to understand the processes underlying creative writing? Creative writing is a complex, multifaceted endeavor that can only be adequately apprehended using an interdisciplinary perspective. Researchers may have therefore been discouraged by the necessity of taking into account insights from other fields, and by the fact that creative writing may be harder to study (because

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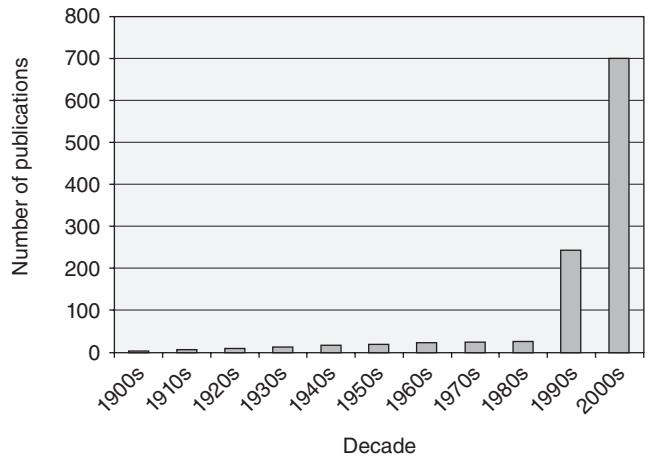

Figure 21.1 Cumulative number of publications on the subject of creative writing indexed in the PsycINFO database, by decade

it may be harder to produce on command), and harder to assess, than other psychological constructs (xv).

Fortunately, research interest in the science of creative writing has grown over recent years. A search of the PsycINFO database of the American Psychological Association for all publications on the topic of "creative writing" yields 702 publications from 1900 to 2010, with fewer than six publications per decade until the 1990s. Publications on the psychology of creative writing multiplied exponentially over the past two decades, with more than 200 in the 1990s, and more than 400 in the 2000s (see Figure 21.1). Psychologists' interest in creative writing is therefore rapidly growing. The purpose of this chapter is to review what has been discovered in this small but growing field of research, and to point to directions for future investigations. The content of this chapter draws in part from *The Psychology of Creative Writing* (S. Kaufman and Kaufman 2009), which brought together a unique collection of perspectives on this topic. The reader is referred to this volume for in-depth discussions of topics that can only be briefly described in this chapter.

To do so, we take a comprehensive approach to understanding creative writing, by considering the sequence of predictors and influences leading a creative writer to engage in a creative process resulting in a creative text. We begin by looking at the creative writer. In particular, we describe existing research on personality and mood. Secondly, we discuss the work of researchers who have attempted to delineate the various necessary steps involved in the creative writing process, and try to answer the question: how do writers move from a blank page to a final product? In doing so, we also review the tools and practices proposed by educators and psychologists to promote and enhance creative writing among students and aspiring writers.

The Creative Writer

Research investigating the characteristics of creative writers constitutes the bulk of scientific knowledge about the psychology of creative writing. In particular, investigations of the personality and mood of creative writers have yielded interesting insights into the determinants of creative writing.

Creative writers are often portrayed as unconventional and somewhat eccentric, a stereotype that has contributed to the fascination of laymen and researchers alike (Piirto 3). Can personality help us understand what distinguishes creative writers from noncreative types, or from creative individuals who work in other domains? Personality as defined by psychologists refers to traits that differ among individuals and present stability or consistency across time and situations (Feist 290).

First, research investigating the personality profiles of creative individuals across domains has evidenced consistent trends. For example, the most stable result across this body of literature is that creative individuals tend to be high in the personality trait of openness to experience as measured by the Five-Factor Model of personality (e.g. King et al. 199). This trait involves active imagination, and aesthetic and intellectual curiosity, as well as a preference for variety reflected by a willingness to try new things and experiences (190). What else do we know about the personalities of creative individuals? In a meta-analysis synthesizing results of numerous studies, Feist found that, overall, creative individuals tend to display more autonomy, introversion, openness to experience (as discussed above), questioning of social norms, self-confidence, self-acceptance, ambition, dominance, hostility, and impulsivity. Furthermore, longitudinal studies suggest that the personality of creative individuals tends to remain stable over time, and that personality traits assessed early in life can predict future creative behavior (299). When examining the personality only of artists (in comparison to non-artists also involved in creative work), Feist found that artists (including writers) were more open to experience and less conscientious than non-artists. Artists' higher openness to experience meant that they were more aesthetic, curious, imaginative, sensitive, and original, and less conventional, rigid, and socialized. Artists' lower levels of conscientiousness meant that they were less cautious, controlled, orderly, and reliable (298). In comparison to scientists specifically, artists appeared to be more anxious, emotionally unstable and rejecting of social norms (299–300). The relationship between nonconformity and creativity was supported by a recent study conducted with a college sample, in which the need of participants to be different correlated with the creativity of their poems and drawings (Joy 274).

Beyond research on creative individuals and creative artists, what do we know about the personality of creative writers specifically? Research on the personality of creative writers was pioneered by Frank Barron and his colleagues at the Institute of Personality Assessment and Research (IPAR) at the University of California, Berkeley. Barron, for example, worked with a sample of 30 distinguished writers invited to spend three days at IPAR in order to undergo a "living-in" assessment. The personality of these

writers was examined using a Q sort technique, in which IPAR researchers each sorted a 100-item set of sentences according to how well they described each writer. The sorts were averaged to produce composite descriptions of each writer, and of the sample. Barron found that five items best described the writers as a whole. They had high intellectual capacity, valued intellectual and cognitive matters, valued independence and autonomy, had high verbal fluency and quality of expression, and enjoyed aesthetic impressions (158). In addition to these five traits, the writers were also judged to be productive, concerned with philosophical problems, to have high aspirations, a wide range of interests, to think unconventionally, to be interesting people, to be honest with others, and to behave consistently with personal ethical standards (158–159).

Piirto conducted an extensive qualitative study of writers included in the Directory of American Poets and Writers (7). To find out about their personalities, she collected and analyzed published interviews, memoirs, and biographies. Her study identified a number of distinguishing traits. First, writers tended to express high levels of ambition and envy. For example, Piirto cited writer T. Coraghessan Boyle's ambition to become "the most famous writer alive and the greatest writer ever" (quoted in Piirto 8). This level of drive means that writers may find it difficult to witness the success of others, which may in turn negatively affect their friendships with other writers. Second, writers in Piirto's study appeared to be highly concerned with philosophical issues, including the meaning of life, as well as the search for truth and beauty (10). Barron summarized this concern by noting that "creative writers are those whose dedication is a quest for ultimate meanings" (159). Third, Piirto's writers tended to display high levels of frankness, risk-taking, and political and social activism (10–12). Fourth, writers placed a high value on empathy, and expressed a desire to feel and communicate the emotions of others. Finally, Piirto noted that her writers tended to have an unusually keen sense of humor (16–18).

Aside from these five attributes, Piirto noted that psychopathology also appears to constitute a distinguishing feature of creative writers (12). Most of the research on this topic has focused on the association between mood disturbances and creativity. Andreasen conducted one of the first quantitative studies looking at psychopathology in creative writers. Over the course of 15 years, she carried out structured interviews with 30 writers (predominantly male) visiting the Iowa Writers' Workshop. The writers were compared with a group of 30 controls matched for age, sex, and educational status. Findings from Andreasen's study highlighted that a large majority of the writers (80 percent) had suffered from some kind of mood disorder at some point in their lives, which was significantly higher than the lifetime prevalence of affective disorders in matched controls (30 percent). Among the 30 writers, 43 percent had suffered from bipolar disorder, 37 percent from major depressive disorder, and 30 percent from alcoholism (1289). Bipolar disorder is characterized by an individual's experience of both episodes of depression – characterized by abnormally low levels of mood and energy - and episodes of mania or hypomania characterized by abnormally elevated levels of mood and energy (1289). The writers' first-degree relatives were also

more likely to have suffered from an affective disorder at some point in their lives, and to be more creative than the relatives of matched controls (1290).

Additional studies have found comparable results. Jamison found a significantly higher prevalence of all psychopathology and of affective disorders in particular in a sample of 47 British writers and artists than in the population at large (76). Similarly, Ludwig compared 59 female writers to 59 matched controls and found that the writers suffered from higher levels of depression, mania, panic attacks, generalized anxiety, eating disorders, and drug abuse ("Mental Illness," 1652). Ludwig subsequently conducted a large-scale historiometric investigation of more than a thousand eminent individuals. By examining their biographies, he found that poets and fiction writers had the highest lifetime rates of all psychological disorders, followed very closely by actors, artists, nonfiction writers, and musicians (*Price of Greatness*, 148). In addition, members of artistic professions were twice as likely to suffer from two or more comorbid psychological disorders as individuals in other professions (149). It is important to note, however, that there are numerous criticisms of the Andreasen, Jamison, and Ludwig work. To take one example, Rothenberg argued that Andreasen's control group was not well matched to the writers chosen; the creative group was comprised of faculty members from the creative writing department, whereas the control group had a wide mix of people (150). Andreasen was the sole interviewer, with no corroborating opinions about the mental health of the writers.

How might writing be associated with poor psychological outcomes? Given the relationship that seems to exist between creative writing and psychopathology, researchers have started to think about the mechanisms underlying this association. Individuals who suffer from psychological disorders may be more likely than others to self-select into the writing profession. Alternatively, third variables that have yet to be discovered may explain this association. It is possible, for example, that experiencing adverse events early in life such as losing a parent predicts both subsequent creative achievement and psychopathology (Simonton 155), without any direct link needing to exist between these two variables. Finally, writing may cause or exacerbate psychopathology. How might writing make individuals feel worse? Self-reflective rumination – the tendency to think repetitively about one's personal (often negative) emotional state – has been proposed as the mechanism explaining the relationship between mood disorders and creativity. Verhaeghen et al., for example, found that, in a sample of undergraduate students, depression was linked to increased self-reflective rumination. Rumination, in turn, predicted creative interests and creative performance by increasing both fluency and seriousness about one's creative activities. The relationship between depression and creativity was fully accounted for by self-reflective rumination – in other words, there was no direct relationship between the two (230). Further exploring the mediating role of rumination, J. Kaufman and Baer argued that the process of writing necessarily entails rumination about one's writing. Indeed, writers need to engage in careful, repetitive thinking about their choice of words and phrases, which often deal with negative emotional content to begin with. Writing may therefore become a form of deliberate dysphoric rumination, which may

prolong or worsen existing mood symptoms (274). The type of writing pursued, however, probably influences the extent to which writing constitutes psychologically damaging rumination. Writing may also provide an avenue for coming out of the vicious circle of rumination, by constructing a coherent narrative to make sense of painful emotions and experiences (J. Kaufman and Sexton 275).

Are there particular factors predicting the presence of psychopathology in writers? First, success seems to be associated with psychopathology. Nobel and Pulitzer Prize-winning writers, for example, are more likely to have suffered from psychological disorders than nonwinners (J. Kaufman, "Genius, Lunatics and Poets," 311). Second, particular forms of writing seem to be differentially associated with psychopathology. Across several studies, poets were more likely than other writers (novelists, playwrights, and journalists) to suffer from mental illness and die young, with female poets having notably higher rates of illness than their counterparts (J. Kaufman and Sexton 270). One explanation for this trend is that poetry-writing may not allow writers to form a coherent narrative in order to build meaning from their experience, and progress cognitively and emotionally. Indeed, poetry may only allow writers to express their strong emotions, but not to process them (277).

The findings summarized above paint a bleak picture of the mental health of creative writers. The truth might be more nuanced than that – indeed, creative writers' productivity is a sign of their resilience, psychological health, and ego strength. The notion that creative writers are "both sicker and healthier psychologically than people in general" (quoted in Piirto 12) was evidenced by Barron's finding that distinguished writers scored simultaneously high on pathological indices and an ego-strength index of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, a widely used personality inventory (Barron 159). Such a finding suggests that the experience of psychological disorders may directly or indirectly constitute both a curse and a gift for creative writers.

The Creative Writing Process

Beyond possessing particular individual qualities, creative writers succeed in their endeavors by engaging in specific behaviors that together constitute the creative writing process. Lubart summarized the existing body of scientific research on the creative writing process, pointing out that different stages and steps have been proposed by scholars (149). With regard to writing in general, Hayes and colleagues proposed three main stages. First, writers go through a reflection phase in which they plan out their writing, decide which themes they will emphasize, and start solving problems. Second, writers enter the production phase, in which they convert their ideas into written text. Third, writers go through a text interpretation phase, in which they read, listen, examine, and revise their text (Hayes and Flower 1107).

With regard to the creative writing process, two models have garnered the most attention. The first account is Wallas's four-stage model of the creative process: preparation, incubation (during which no conscious work is done), illumination (the "a-ha"

moment of insight during which ideas enter consciousness), and verification (Lubart 154). This model continues to serve as the main outline to understand how individuals find ideas and transform them into a creative output. Much research has been conducted to refine each of Wallas's stages, by including for example a phase of creative "frustration" before the illumination stage (155). Another popular account of the creative process is Finke, Ward, and Smith's Geneplore model, which proposes that creative work involves both generative processes (involving the production of original ideas), and exploratory processes (involving the examination, evaluation, and refinement of ideas produced) (Lubart 156–157). In addition, subprocesses are involved in both phases: for instance, writers begin by retrieving information from memory in order to generate ideas. Ideas generated can become original if individuals try to retrieve information beyond the path of least resistance (i.e. beyond what comes to mind first). To do this, individuals can be encouraged to think abstractly, to think specifically, and to combine ideas that are not usually combined (Ward and Lawson 208).

Research on generative processes has so far been much more prevalent than research on exploratory processes. This may in part result from the "genius myth" – the common view that creativity consists of extraordinary thinking occurring suddenly, via bursts of inspiration coming from the unconscious (S. Kaufman and Kaufman, "Putting the Pieces Together," 359). As a result of this conception, which suggests that creative individuals are able to spontaneously produce high-quality material, less research has been conducted on how writers revise their works and transform them from raw material into finished products. Yet, existing research suggests that the spontaneous productions of creative individuals are usually not without flaws, and that evaluation and revision play a critical role in creative thinking. According to Lubart, the creative writing process is better described as many small creative moments of insight rather than one "big bang" (158). Similarly, Sawyer emphasized the primordial role of hard work at each stage of the creative process, including editing, analyzing, and consulting with others (176). The necessity of revision is echoed by Lamott's textbook on creative writing, *Bird by Bird*, which states that all good writers start with "shitty first drafts . . . This is how they end up with good second drafts and terrific third drafts" (quoted in Waitman and Plucker 299).

How should these various steps be timed? When is the best time to start evaluating the ideas one has generated? Lubart noted that three theories compete with regard to this question. One camp argues that early evaluation is optimal, to efficiently get rid of useless ideas as soon as possible. Another camp proposes that late evaluation is good, to make sure that all ideas are given full consideration, and to diminish the risk that original ideas will be discarded as a result of being perceived as too risky. Finally, a third camp suggests that evaluation is best used cyclically, to allow for the development of original thinking while at the same time providing close monitoring (160). Lubart tested these three competing views by asking undergraduate students to write short stories in one of three experimental conditions or a control condition. In the experimental conditions, students were interrupted and asked to evaluate their

writing either early, late, or twice at different stages of the process. Results showed that students who evaluated their work early produced more creative stories than students in the three other conditions, suggesting that exercising critical thinking as early as possible in the creative writing process may be most beneficial (160).

How can the creative writing process be enhanced? Can writing even be taught? This common question stems from the popular view, drawn from an ancient aphorism, that "poets are born, not made" (poeta nascitur non fit) (Dawson 7). Yet, researchers and educators have begun to uncover concrete practices that can help maximize original thinking. We review here research on how beliefs about creativity, educational practices, play, writer's block, mood, and flow can be used to enhance the creative writing process.

A first approach to enhancing the creative writing process is to examine people's beliefs about creativity, and to dispel some of the myths that surround it. Waitman and Plucker noted that the creative process is often portrayed as mysterious and magical, giving creative writers "the sense that they must be hit with a kind of lightning-like inspiration to be able to conjure a text like those that inspired their own novitiate efforts at writing" (287). As a result, creative writers may often believe that they do not have full control over the creative process. Recent research on "everyday creativity," however, has evidenced that all humans use creative thinking processes all the time in their daily lives, and thus shows that these processes are not as enigmatic as they seem (Richards 190). Going further, Weisberg (5) proposed that even eminent creativity can be understood from the point of view of ordinary thinking processes, in contrast to the "genius myth" which suggests that creative thinking is qualitatively different from normal thinking (and therefore inaccessible to ordinary people). Creative writing can therefore be taught by helping individuals use skills that they already use in other aspects of their lives, and apply them to writing.

In addition to the myth of sudden inspiration, creative writers also tend to be exposed to the Romantic idea that they will work best alone, unconstrained by others or by conventions. Sawyer, however, argued that a close, impartial look at the creative process suggests that creators are necessarily and constantly interacting with their social and cultural contexts (168). This is especially true of modern writing forms (e.g. advertising, screenwriting, etc.), which have been far less studied than "higher" art forms such as novel and poetry writing. An examination of the creative process of eminent writers such as Shakespeare or Tolkien suggests that writers collaborate with others extensively at various points of their writing (173–174). Helping creative individuals benefit from their social interactions (rather than be hindered by them) therefore constitutes an important goal for researchers interested in enhancing the creative process.

In keeping with this, creative writers must cultivate a strong sense of self-efficacy and confidence in their abilities. Without such faith in themselves, aspiring writers may see their hopes crushed by negative evaluations from peers, teachers, and critics, in potentially humiliating moments of "creative mortification" (Beghetto). To prevent

promising but sensitive students from becoming discouraged, educators in charge of creative writing programs have moved away from the use of harsh critiques and evaluation. Instead, psychologically safe environments are being designed to help students find their voice and feel comfortable generating ideas of varying quality, for which they will receive constructive feedback (Chandler and Schneider 330). Baer and McKool nonetheless pointed out that educators are placed in an uncomfortable dilemma. While creativity thrives on intrinsic motivation and the absence of evaluation, teachers need to evaluate and reward students for their work, thus introducing potentially harmful extrinsic motivators (277). A number of good practices can however prevent extrinsic motivators from damaging the creativity of students. Importantly, teachers should set separate times for learning basic writing skills and learning how to think creatively. By teaching these skills separately, they can establish that the former set of skills, but not the latter, will be the object of evaluation. Instead, learning to think and write creatively can be presented as "just for fun" (Baer and McKool 282). In addition, when evaluation is necessary, feedback should be given in an empowering way that will maintain students' faith in their abilities and hope that they can succeed, rather than in a controlling and critical way.

Besides classroom teaching, what other practices can help students learn to think creatively? One interesting avenue of research is the hypothesis that pretend play constitutes a fertile training ground for creative thinking. Play consists of symbolic behavior in which people and objects are treated as though they are someone or something else. According to Russ, play is inherently related to affective processes, as it allows for the expression of emotions, stimulates the development of emotion regulation, and creates feelings of positive emotion and enjoyment (249). By putting us in touch with our emotions and desires, and by allowing us to engage in imaginary representations without constraints from what is possible in reality, play provides a good training ground for the generation of novel ideas (248).

Once writers understand the creative process and begin to work, what can prevent them from being successful? One issue of foremost importance with regard to the enhancement of the creative writing process is writer's block – the perceived inability to write that can cause high levels of distress and discouragement in writers. Anecdotal reports of writer's block are unfortunately common, but appear to often resolve with the occurrence of vivid dreams (Singer and Barrios 225). In keeping with this, blocked writers report engaging in lower levels of positive and constructive imagery, having overall less vivid mental imagery activities, and being more depressed and anxious than nonblocked writers (229). Consequently, a one-week experimental intervention using free waking imagery appears to lead to improvements (239–240). Writer's block comes in different flavors, and Singer and Barrios have identified four subtypes of blocked writers: writers experiencing high levels of emotional distress and wishing to avoid the solitude of writing (the *dysphoric/avoidant subtype*), writers for whom writing poses interpersonal dilemmas (the *guilty/interpersonally hindered subtype*), writers who lack the creative aptitude to meets the demands of the writing task (the *constricted/dismissive/disengaged subtype*), and finally, writers who harbor high levels of impatience,

hostility, and anger, and for whom writer's block elicits narcissistic concerns (the *angry/disappointed subtype*) (230–234). This typology points out that the processes involved in writer's block present important individual differences which may guide how one goes about addressing it.

Mood appears to constitute another important tool in enhancing the creative writing process. Given the importance of mood in the profiles of creative individuals, much research has been conducted to determine what kinds of emotions best foster creativity in general, and verbal creativity in particular. Overall, such studies have yielded contradictory results. Some studies suggest that positive emotions may enhance creativity, while others have found that negative emotions may be most beneficial. Positive emotions may increase creativity via a number of different mechanisms. First, positive emotions may broaden attention and increase cognitive flexibility, so that individuals can associate concepts or ideas that are usually seen as unrelated (Isen 13–14). Second, positive emotions may promote a playful approach to tasks that benefits creativity by encouraging risk-taking and experimentation (10). Third, positive emotions may increase creativity by fostering intrinsic motivation and persistence (Isen and Reeve 318). In contrast, negative emotions may increase creativity by decreasing biases in thinking and reasoning (Forgas 98–99), as well as by increasing persistence (Van Kleef et al. 1046).

Several factors may explain the presence of contradictory findings in the literature, including the type of task considered, the type of positive mood and negative mood used in studies, and individual differences in participants. Bartolic et al., for example, found that induced euphoria enhanced performance on a verbal fluency task, whereas induced dysphoria enhanced performance on a figural fluency task (680). Stafford et al. found that positive mood enhanced creative association-making only in extroverts, but not in introverts (831). Finally, Forgeard found that negative emotions enhanced performance on a creative caption-writing task only in participants low in depression to begin with. Inducing momentary emotions (both positive and negative) did not appear to enhance the creativity of captions produced by participants high in depression (908).

Mood may influence the creative process and, likewise, the creative process may lead individuals to experience desirable states providing reinforcement for creative behavior. So how does the creative process feel to writers, and can this feeling be used to enhance the creative process? Csikszentmihalyi conducted a qualitative study of highly creative individuals, including a number of eminent writers. These writers described experiencing "flow" during the writing process. Flow is a psychological state defined by the presence of both high skills and high challenges, giving individuals a sense of control over the activity at hand. Flow is characterized by intense focus and concentration, a merging of action and awareness, the feeling that the passage of time may be distorted in some way, and intrinsic rewards (110–113). Thus, when in flow, writers are able to exert a considerable amount of effort toward their work while at the same time being fully engaged and absorbed in the process. In spite of the effort dedicated to the task, flow allows writers to reflect back on the process as enjoyable.

Perry (214) proposed that writers can cultivate flow by using the following practices: First, the writing process benefits from being intrinsically motivated by the task at hand. Second, flow is maintained by getting regular feedback, allowing writers to know how they are doing and what they should be doing next, or at least to sense that they are on the right track. Third, successful writers report that they engage in rituals that help them focus their attention inward and prepare for writing (even if they are not consciously aware of such rituals). These rituals often help establish routines and schedules. An interesting ritual is the habit of stopping a work session in the middle of a scene, paragraph, or sentence, allowing the writer to know where to begin much quicker when work is resumed. Fourth, writers can preserve flow by using strategies to minimize anxiety about potentially critical audiences. Some writers manage not to think about the audience at all; others may think of the audience as a supportive, anonymous crowd. Yet other writers may place themselves in the role of the audience in order to utilize to their advantage an exterior perspective on their work.

Conclusion

The study of creative writing is a relatively new and exciting field of research in psychology. Psychologists have begun to uncover fascinating answers to questions such as: Who are creative writers? Why do they write? How do they write? What challenges do they face? What benefits do they reap? And how do we know when a text is creative? The present chapter offered insights from this growing body of literature, and proposed future directions for research in this area.

An important challenge for the future is to disseminate educational practices to foster creative writing abilities in students. While schools already teach students to write, a stronger focus should be placed on teaching them to write creatively. Teaching creative writing is of utmost importance in helping students develop a creative attitude toward life, and will help them develop the capacity to effectively deal with challenges in their daily and professional lives (Sternberg xvi).

Today more than ever, creative writing continues to be a passion for everyday and eminent writers. We hope that psychologists will continue to investigate the determinants and consequences of this passion, and participate in promoting its benefits. As a case in point for the power and appeal of creative writing, National Novel Writing Month (casually known as NaNoWriMo or NaNo), after less than a decade of existence, now motivates more than 200,000 budding writers each year to write an original novel of more than 50,000 words during the month of November. No fewer than 2.8 billion words were written during NaNoWriMo in November of 2010. Why would so many put themselves through writing such a large amount? One possible explanation is that "for one month out of the year, we can stew and storm, and make a huge mess of our apartments and drink lots of coffee at odd hours" (NaNoWriMo). But the reasons given by writers go beyond simple enjoyment. Indeed, "The

glow from making big, messy art, and watching others make big, messy art, lasts for a long, long time. The act of sustained creation does bizarre, wonderful things to you. It changes the way you read. And changes, a little bit, your sense of self. We like that" (NaNoWriMo).

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