

**Recommended Open Educational Resources for an
Undergraduate Introduction to Creative Writing Course
by Amy Fladeboe**

Poetry Unit Materials:

1. “*Ordinary Genius* by Kim Adonnizio” by BookVideosTV | URL:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QIc4Lw1rTRs>

2. “An Interview with Kim Addonizio” by Susan Brown | URL:

<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A259157552/LitRC?u=mnacenturycl&sid=LitRC&xid=fcfcddd>

These two resources introduce poet and poetry instructor, Kim Addonizio to students along with an excerpt from her book *Ordinary Genius*, chapters 1-3 which is not accessible free online, so instructors would need to upload a scanned excerpt for these materials to be relevant. From these two resources, students will get to see the author’s brief book introduction and read an interview with her. *Ordinary Genius* is a book I often assign in more advanced Poetry Workshops, but for introduction to creative writing, which samples all genres, it feels sufficient to simply introduce this voice to students without requiring the entire book. While I found both these sources helpful, I don’t think they can replace an excerpt from *Ordinary Genius* which stresses the importance of a regular writing practice and creating something. It is my hope that this inspires student to get started and breaks the ice.

3. *Bodega* by Su Hwang | URL:

N/A: *Unlimited Ebsco Access*

Many Minnesota libraries have or can reasonably obtain unlimited-user Ebsco access to many but not all titles that have won a Minnesota Book award. While these may not be offered through all institutions, it’s certainly worth looking into the lists of your state’s publication awards to see if such a program exists. I like to assign a work recently published (within the last 3 years) by a single-author in each of the major genres, poetry, creative nonfiction, and fiction. I’m particularly interested in any authors who could visit our campus, and since my community college has a modest budget for speaker honorarium’s, local authors who do not need to travel far often meet these criteria. Interestingly enough, I taught Hwang’s *Bodega* last year and she visited our campus before she had won the book award and before my library could offer free online access to the title for students. I would most definitely teach this book again, but I’ll also be eager to see who this year’s winner in Poetry is to update this selection. Additionally, I would consider adopting a collection of stories and a collection of essays should unlimited Ebsco access be available for other winning titles in the other genres I teach in this course.

4. “Who Am I? Think Again” by Hetain Patel | URL:

https://www.ted.com/talks/hetain_patel_who_am_i_think_again?utm_campaign=tedsread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare

I use this Ted Talk to introduce the concept of imitation as a tool for practicing poetic technique. I like that it is about theatrical, performance, and accent imitation instead directly related to imitation in the art of poetry. The first assignment I give in Introduction to Creative Writing is to write an imitation of a poem from a collection we are studying, such as Hwang’s Bodega. I am much more interested in students embracing the craft language of poetry than creating an excellent poem in this assignment. Students surprise themselves with what they produce through imitation, and it’s a great way to take the pressure out of sharing personal work. They can always blame it on the original poet if they are not proud of their piece.

5. “Glossary of Poetic Terms” by Poetry Foundation | URL:

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/learn/glossary-terms>

Along with the imitation poem, I require a 2-3 page reflection on their imitation process, the elements they imitated, and a self-critique. I require that students integrate at least five words from the Poetry Foundation’s Glossary of Poetic terms into their reflection, and I like to quiz them on these terms and/or play trivia with them. It’s not my expectation that students master all of these terms, but I would like to see them practice implementing some restraints in their poetry. This glossary is user-friendly with simple definitions and examples from various poems. While dictionary reading is a bit too dry and labor-intensive, I prefer to narrow down the list, and or assign students a few terms each to introduce to the class as an activity.

Creative Nonfiction Unit Materials:

1. “The Braided Essay as Social Justice Action” by Nicole Walker | URL:

<https://www.creativenonfiction.org/online-reading/braided-essay-social-justice-action>

2. “A Brief Guide to Essays” by Allison K. Williams | URL:

<https://brevity.wordpress.com/tag/braided-essay/>

3. “True Stories: An Interview with Lee Gutkind” by Jeffrey J. Williams | URL:

<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A259155069/LitRC?u=mnacenturycl&sid=LitRC&xid=8b471197>

I use these three articles to introduce creative nonfiction, Lee Gutkind, referred to as the grandfather of CNF, and experimental essay forms. Students are often new to this genre and associate essays with academic essays for a composition course but rarely know about the wide range and variety of essay styles. I require that students produce one of the experimental essay styles that these sources reference. Williams’ and Walkers’ pieces get students excited about forms, and I sometimes even use these in an advanced composition course to shake student perceptions of essays up. They come from Brevity and Creative Nonfiction, the two most well-known literary magazines in the CNF genre, so that’s an opportunity to get students thinking about publishing as well.

4. “The Fourth State of Matter” by Joann Beard | URL:

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1996/06/24/the-fourth-state-of-matter>

5. “On Becoming an American Writer” by Alexander Chee | URL:

<https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2018/04/19/on-becoming-an-american-writer/>

6. “Total Eclipse” by Annie Dillard

<https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2017/08/annie-dillards-total-eclipse/536148/>

7. “Black Joy” by Michael Kleber-Diggs | URL: <https://www.mnartists.org/article/black-joy>

8. “As if To Say” by Michael Torres | URL: <https://www.thesunmagazine.org/issues/503/as-if-to-say>

I’m always coming across new essays that I want to use as examples in the cnf unit, and these are the ones I keep returning to because they are either iconic, socio-culturally relevant, or produced by local authors. Dillard and Beard’s pieces are the iconic ones I prefer to use, and I like the idea that my students might be able to reference these essays in their transfer programs because advanced students in MFA programs have all read these two. Alexander Chee’s essay, “On Becoming an American” is a more recent discovery, and I like this one because it’s also in his collection of CNF essays *How To Write An Autobiographical Novel*, which I have taught before and frequently recommend to my students. Kleber-Diggs and Torres are both poets who also write nonfiction and live in Minnesota. I know them both personally and I like bringing these connections into the classroom to illustrate the accessibility of local artists and a pathway to joining the larger literary community. I would consider bridging the poetry unit to the CNF unit through their work in both genres.

Fiction Unit Materials:

1. “Get a Job: The Importance of Work in Your Writing” by Benjamin Percy | URL:

<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A272245765/LitRC?u=mnacenturycl&sid=LitRC&xid=c4ae86bf>

This is an excellent article on characterization and the significance of work in the complexity of a character’s development. I pair this reading with an exercise using Tobias Wolfe’s “Bullet in the Brain,” which has a main character who has a job as an art critic. Any short fiction piece in first-person or omniscient third-person where the main character’s job is prominent could work for this writing prompt. I hand out new jobs to each student, a plumber, a ballerina, a math teacher, a mobster, a deep sea diver and I ask students to rewrite the opening of the story with the same action and incidents, the same plot, the same setting, but a new character with this new job, using Percy’s craft concepts as their guide. Then, I let students read their pieces and their classmates guess what job the character has. It’s a fun activity that reinforces these intriguing craft points on point of view, concrete details, setting, and metaphor.

2. “Videos: On Writing” by Geoff Herbach | URL:
https://www.geoffherbach.com/video/video_writing.html

Geoff Herbach’s videos are accessible on his website and although they seem geared toward young writers, I find them delightful, entertaining, and very applicable to crafting strong fiction. He has five short videos on concrete details, building character, scene/summary, dialogue, and voice. I encourage students to view them all, but I like to use the dialogue video to dig into this particular concept. Students use Herbach’s writing prompt, and “they hide out in the bushes” to eavesdrop on dialogue and discover its real cracked cadence as well as avoid summaries. Herbach has granted permission to include his website in this list of recommended OER.

3. “Don’t Do This” by Jerome Stern | URL:
<https://fictionatstcloud.files.wordpress.com/2010/08/dont-do-this-jerome-stern.pdf>

This humorous article gives a list of don’ts for fiction writers, and I have students begin revising their stories to commit these don’ts in a purging sort of exercise. I like using a humorous activity to shed light on bad moves in fiction in a way that won’t shame the writers. This activity fits well with a first draft of story that has not been workshopped yet. This gives students a chance to make revisions independently before their peers can call out any of these don’ts in their work. Students end up referring to these common concerns when workshopping because they are empowered by learning this language often reserved for instructors of creative writing.

4. “Rise, Baby, Rise!” by George Saunders | URL:
<https://paulsaxton.files.wordpress.com/2013/01/saunders-barthelme-a.pdf>

This essay focuses on elements of the classical plot structure and includes a detailed break-down of the plot’s function in Barthelme’s “The School” which is a flash fiction story, readily available on the web. I always pair that story with this reading. I like to use this craft essay to get students thinking about advanced craft topics they might write about and to get them to consider how plot functions in their own short stories. After reading “The School” and “Rise, Baby, Rise!” I have students chart out the plot of their stories to identify where it may drag or summarize essential plot turns. It is my hope that this activity will result in reflection and follow-up revision to their stories.

5. “Light” by Lesley Nneka Arimah | URL: <https://granta.com/light/>

This is a wonderful story by local MN author, Lesley Nneka Arimah. It is a heartwarming coming-of-age story that students are often touched by. Its unconventional plot the subverts chronology provide a helpful example for students to study and imitate in a revision of their own stories. Emerging writers often lean on chronology, and I like challenging them to see another possibility. Arimah’s story does this wonderfully.

6. “Short Short Stories + Dave Eggers” by Dave Eggers | URL:

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/series/shortshortstories+dave-eggers>

This is a collection of flash fiction by Dave Eggers that was published in The Guardian. Because I always require flash fiction workshop pieces in introductory courses, Egger’s work is a good example, free and accessible online. The stories are a bit dated, but I still return to them again and again when I introduce flash. I especially enjoy teaching “The Immortal Fly Is Tired,” which prompts an exercise in using an unusual narrator. If a compilation of contemporary flash were available free online, I might replace this source with that, but for now, I think it works alright to include this more dated work to illustrate the playfulness and craft choices made in flash fiction.

Publishing Unit Materials:

1. Databases of Literary Magazines & Journals | URLs:

New Pages: <https://www.newpages.com/magazines/literary-magazines>

CLMP: <https://www.clmp.org/>

Poet’s & Writers: https://www.pw.org/literary_magazines?apage=*

For my publishing unit, I like to get students started with a road map to literary magazines by showing them the databases above that organize literary magazines and journals. These databases can be quite overwhelming for students who may be experiencing this genre for the first time, but they are important tools. I want students to know the volume of publishing venues out there, so they can begin thinking about their own submissions. I encourage students to develop a working spreadsheet of literary magazines with particular features illustrated in the columns such as frequency of publications, contests, deadlines, submission fees, author payment, subjects, genres, personal notes, and their own rating or how they would tier that particular publication (in other words, would this be a top tier achievement to be published here, a medium tier, or entry-level).

I also provide a widget of 20+ links to some specific publication homepages in the following categories: MN Literary Magazines, Lit Mags that Only Take Undergraduate submissions, and Major National Lit Mags. With the publications below, I have students review one MN lit mag and 1 undergrad lit mag in small groups and present on their findings, so they may all add all of these magazines to their spreadsheets. Then, I require that students prepare an independent presentation on one of the national publications, so these too can be added to all of their spreadsheets. As a follow-up assignment, I have students prepare one of their workshop pieces for submission and write a letter and bio to any one of the literary magazines presented on by them or their classmates in their group presentations or solo presentations. For extra credit, they can actually follow through with submitting to one of them. It is challenging to keep these links up-to-date as the publishing industry changes and evolves.

2. MN Literary Magazines | URLs:

Runestone: <https://runestonejournal.com/>
Paper Darts: <http://paperdartsmagazine.com/>
Poetry City, USA: <http://www.poetrycityusa.com/>
Blue Earth Review: <https://blueearthreview.mnsu.edu/>
Waterstone Review: <https://waterstonereview.com/>

Because I want my students to both recognize the literary landscape around them and be welcomed into this community, I think it's crucial to point students to their local literary magazines first. I ask students to add these magazines to their spreadsheet, and I share my own experiences with them, some of which I have been published in and some of which I wish I had been published in. It's helpful to bring in copies of a few magazines so students can analyze them in groups but form their own opinions for their spreadsheets. Some of the magazines are entirely published online and some of them have print editions as well. Another benefit of prioritizing this category is that some of these lit mags are associated with creative writing programs that are potential transfer institutions for my students.

3. Lit Mags that Take Undergraduate Student Submissions | URLs:

The Allegheny Review: <https://alleghenyreview.wordpress.com/>
The Blue Route: <https://widenerblueroute.org/>
Furrow: <http://furrowmag.org/submissions/>
Glass Mountain: http://www.glassmountainmag.com/?page_id=2
Mangrove: <https://mangrove.as.miami.edu/index.html>
Prairie Margins: <https://prairiemargins.com/about/>
Susquehanna Review: <https://www.susquehannareview.com/>

This list of magazines that publish undergraduates was compiled by Kris Bigalk at Normandale Community College. Kris is not only the founder of the first AFA in creative writing, but she's also a board member of AWP. I reviewed all of her listed publications and removed the no longer publishing websites. Maintaining a list like this is labor intensive, and it would be nice to see the major database aggregate according to this category because these sort of magazines are often shutting down due to funding issues, and new publications are always popping up. That said these are excellent entry-level publishing opportunities for students, and on occasion a student has a submission accepted and published during the semester which can be very encouraging for them and their peers.

4. Major National Lit Mags | URLs:

The Missouri Review: <https://www.missourireview.com/>
Crab Orchard Review: <https://craborchardreview.siu.edu/>
McSweeney's: <https://www.mcsweeneys.net/pages/guidelines-for-web-submissions>
Rock & Sling (A Journal of Witness): <https://rockandsling.com/>
The Paris Review: <https://www.theparisreview.org/>
Ruminate: <https://www.ruminatemagazine.com/>
[The Sun \(no paywall this year\)](#)
Willow Springs: <http://willowspringsmagazine.org/>
Yemassee: <http://yemasseejournal.com/>
Calyx, Inc.: Art & Literature by Women: <http://www.calyxpress.org/>
Cimarron Review: <https://cimarronreview.com/>
Gulf Coast: <http://gulfcoastmag.org/>

These are the national literary magazines that I like to encourage students to check out. These magazines have a wide distribution, respect in the international literary community, and they occasionally host conferences, workshops, or other literary events in addition to publishing. I like to keep this list diverse and I only promote national publications that I respect. There are more than enough opportunities for students to stumble upon poorly edited, low-budget magazines, so this is a way that I can have a small aesthetic impact on their tastes in literary magazines in the future, but I know students will need to form their own preferences. For those students who dive deeper into creative writing, this is a small list and just a starting point.