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"Inspiration in the Drop of Ink": Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Observations in Introduction to Creative Writing

Wendy Bishop claimed that "…generation is the first requirement of a writing process" (62). Yet for many novices, learning that writers do something other than pull lucky lightning bolts down from the sky first requires a paradigm shift. Luckily for writing teachers, identifying such points where our students need to shift their understanding—the threshold concepts of our disciplines—helps us to design powerful learning activities. In the following, I report on a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning project (SoTL) conducted in Introduction to Creative Writing at a two-year college in which I gathered and analyzed evidence of an activity—keeping a collaborative journal of observations— designed to help students unlearn myths of inspiration and shift attitudes about the writing process. The results show that students do indeed enter Creative Writing with powerful prior beliefs about the role of inspiration in the writing process; further, transfer of knowledge from first-year composition and creative nonfiction writing assignments aid them in their learning about generation.

In their collection *Naming What We Know: Threshold Concepts in Writing Studies,* editors Linda Adler-Kassner and Elizabeth Wardle identify "writing is a knowledge-making activity" as a fundamental principle for the field. In the collection, Heidi Estrem further explores the concept, elucidating that writers discover what they know through writing—disciplinary knowledge that creative writers certainly co-own. Yet, novices tend to regard writing a poem as a task of transcribing an idea or feeling already fully formed, impeding their entrance to the deep practice of the discipline. Additionally, new creative writers have another problem when it comes to "inspiration." Many believe creativity itself is an inborn trait—a belief that can be shared when it helps them but function as a weight when it does not. University of Maryland researchers Denis Dumas and Kevin N. Dunbar find in "The Creative Stereotype Effect" the mindset that one is creative (or not) to be a factor of success in divergent thinking tasks, a measure for

thinking creatively. Given this, it might seem we should coach all students to believe in their innate powers of creativity. The research echoes an insight plumbed by James Tate's poem "Teaching the Ape to Write Poems," in which the sole pedagogical move is Dr. Bluespire's prompt "'You look like a god sitting there. / Why don't you try writing something?'" Yet for students to gain true disciplinary understanding—to learn how writers actually work and regard their craft—we can't trick them all into believing, all of the time, that they are gods, possessed with the power of creation. Myths of the solitary genius writer not only set up an unattainable standard (all too easy for one rejection to deflate) but are especially deleterious for creating an inclusive curriculum. In *Toward an Inclusive Creative Writing: Threshold Concepts to Guide the Literary Writing Curriculum*, Janelle Adsit points out the particular difficulty for students from some marginalized communities to identify with the solitary writer who can choose to sit outside (and above) their community, leisurely awaiting the muse. Thus that creativity can be taught and practiced, that writers use a variety of strategies to jumpstart their work, becomes to key to an inclusive curriculum, in addition to a more practical one—and possibly a more transferable one. According to Adler-Kassner and Wardle, curriculums based on threshold concepts, because of how they provide students with a metacognitive framework to contextualize their learning, work hand in hand with the goal of teaching for transfer.

When designing a project to help students unlearn reliance on inspiration, I was also interested in another habit of mind of writers: observing, or what Rebecca Meacham calls "learning to see anew." "Learning to see anew" refers to writers developing their eyes and ears for details and encompasses a writerly approach to the world in which the writing process is understood to begin away from the writing desk and instead to suffuse the writer's everyday life. Many writing teachers assign journals to help students learn to observe and to generate, mining their lives for material. I hit upon the idea of keeping a collaborative journal of observations on a google doc (accessible on phones, when out in the world) in order to open discussion of what makes interesting observations and how writers, in different ways, might reuse such details later. This activity would prompt students to both practice and reflect upon "seeing anew" and help them reconceive received ideas of "inspiration," replacing them with a notion of writers at work in the world. The focusing research question for my SoTL project became: "How might direct instruction in keeping a journal of observations influence introductory creative writing students' attitudes about how creative writers generate material?"

Methodology

SoTL is an approach to pedagogy in which teacher-scholars pose questions about student learning and examine evidence, aiming to create generalizable knowledge to be shared with other teacher-scholars (Hassel). To assess the results of the activity of the collaborative journal I planned to gather a few different forms of evidence. For one, I created a survey using Qualtrics to gather basic information about participants, including prior writing courses and students' pre and post-course beliefs about inspiration and what things are "helpful to writers." Students rated fifteen different activities, such as keeping a journal or reading professional works for their "helpfulness" to writers. (See Appendix A.) After a trial with this survey in one section of Introduction to Creative Writing in Fall 2016, in Spring 2017 I gave the surveys to my class of twenty-three students and students in three additional Introduction to Creative Writing courses[1] taught within my same institution but by different instructors on four different campuses[2] for a total sample size of eighty-two students for the pre-survey and forty-eight for the post. For another form of evidence, I examined students' creative work, author's notes, and final reflective letters.

Only students in my sections undertook the collaborative journal. I gave them prompts for out-of-class observing—for example, to record a line of overheard dialogue or find something "out of place" at work—and I was able to observe their increasing skills with selecting details as writers would, for their language, mystery, or suggestion. Entries (initialed) were due before class started and worth a few points for completion. In class, students learned through discussing the google doc entries, noting which prompted chuckles or awe and which were most "stolen" for in-class freewriting. In this way generation became more visible and tangible. To further explore how this activity might have influenced my students' beliefs about inspiration and generation, I compared my students' post-survey responses about "What helps writers" with those of students in other sections who did not engage in

[1] The first question in the Qualtrics survey asked for student permission to participate in my IRB-approved study. I removed student names and initials while analyzing the work I'd collected.

[2] The University of Wisconsin Colleges English Department's Composition course sequence included learning outcomes related to knowledge of writing processes. The UW Colleges were restructured July 1, 2018, with the thirteen two-year campuses re-assigned to various University of Wisconsin comprehensive institutions. The author's home campus, UW Marathon County, joined University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, becoming University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point at Wausau.

the same activity. Certainly this was not a perfect experiment. No doubt there were many differences in activities and approaches that I used in my course and that my colleagues at other institutions used in theirs. An additional difference I noted after the semester was over was that my course included more creative nonfiction assignments, which also influenced student learning about generation and inspiration, perhaps more than the collaborative journaling.

Results and Discussion

Overall, my results support that 1) Introduction to Creative Writing students do indeed enter the course with powerful, prevailing ideas about the role of "inspiration" and the importance of "being in the mood to write." Further, 2) from both the survey and a case study of three students, I found student learning about the writing process in creative writing to be related to their prior learning from first-year composition. Finally, 3) I found that creative nonfiction writing assignments in general, perhaps more than the specific activity of journaling observations, help introductory creative writing students understand writers' use of writing processes—demystifying myths of the lightning-struck genius. The three results are discussed below:

Result 1) Introductory creative writing students enter the course with powerful, prevailing ideas about the role of "inspiration" and the importance of "being in the mood to write."

The first question on the survey asked students "Which of the following are helpful for Creative Writers?" and gave them the ability to rate each provided answer on a four-point scale, with points labelled "Possibly Harmful," "Not that Helpful," "Helpful," and "Extremely Helpful." The list contained the following (summarized from Appendix A):

- Reading professional works
- Getting critique from peers
- Not being graded
- Being inspired
- Keeping a journal
- Writing from real life
- Writing multiple drafts
- Freewriting with a prompt
- Being in the right mood to write
- Having deadlines

- Observing the world
- Having an audience/knowing someone will read the writing
- Training in specific techniques (like using dialogue in a story or line breaks in a poem)

Among the fifteen different activities, "Inspiration" and "Being in the Right Mood to Write" landed among top four highest rated as being "extremely helpful" or "helpful" in both Fall and Spring pre-course surveys, as shown in Tables 1 and 2.

	1. Being Inspired	2. Getting Critique from Peers	3. Being in the Right Mood to Write	4. Writing Multiple Drafts
Fall 2016 (N = 19)	"extremely helpful" 84% "helpful" 16%	"extremely helpful" 68% "helpful" 21%	"extremely helpful" 63% "helpful" 37%	"extremely helpful" 58% "helpful" 42%

Table 1: Top 4 highest rated as "helpful to creative writers" in pre-course survey, Fall.

	1. Observing the World	2. Getting Critique from Peers	3. Being Inspired	4. Being in the Right Mood to Write
Spring 2017 (N = 82)	"extremely helpful" 63% "helpful" 33%	"extremely helpful" 63% "helpful" 33%	"extremely helpful" 61% "helpful" 38%	"extremely helpful" 55% "helpful" 38%

Table 2: Top 4 highest rated as "helpful to creative writers" in pre-course survey, Spring.

Students enter the course with strong assumptions about the creative writing process, a result that fits with Gregory Light's observations of students' understanding of the act of creative writing as located within the highly personal and internal self. Yet this also reveals a barrier to learning as students seem mostly to situate the ability to generate

ideas outside of a writer's control. This conception of the writing process reinforces deleterious and privileged cultural ideas about solitary genius writers that do not serve all students equally (Adsit). Nor does it serve introductory students seeking access to creative writing as a practice, or as a set of transferable skills.

Interestingly, in addition to students' high evaluation of the roles of inspiration and mood, both Fall and Spring groups noted the value of "getting critique from peers" (cited as "extremely helpful" by 68% of the Fall group and 63% of the Spring group in pre-course surveys). Additionally, "Observing the world" rated most highly for Spring students, when it hadn't even broken the top four for the Fall group. This did not seem to be because Spring students had more experience with creative writing. (All surveyed students from our two-year campuses were freshmen or sophomores, and only eight students had previously taken a creative writing course.) Yet, it did lead me to wonder about students' prior experiences with writing from composition courses—where students would have experienced peer critique, and possibly forms of public writing that might have involved observing the world. To investigate, I broke out results by prior composition course completion and examined three cases of individual students.

Result 2) Student learning about the writing process in creative writing is related to their prior learning from first-year composition classes

Referencing Bishop, David Starkey begins his textbook *Creative Writing: Four Genres in Brief* with a discussion of the ways in which composition courses lay a foundation for creative writing. Using the National Council of Teachers of English 2004 statement of "Beliefs about the Teaching of Writing," Starkey highlights that writing can be taught and that writing occurs through a process. Table 3 shows Spring students' pre-course survey ratings for the role of "being inspired" broken out by their prior first-year composition course completion (with a C or better). Students' regard for the role of inspiration decreased in relation to higher levels of past writing courses successfully completed.

Prior course completed with a "C" or better	Rating of "Being Inspired" as "extremely helpful"	Other items rated by more than 50% as "extremely helpful"
English 101 (N = 11)	81%	Writing Multiple Drafts (81%); Having Deadlines (73%); Observing the World (73%); Getting Critique (63%); Being in the Right Mood (63%); Training in techniques (63%); Reading Professional Works (55%)
English 102 (N = 52)	60%	Getting critique from peers (58%); Observing the World (58%); Being in the Right Mood (54%)
Prior Collegehere Creative Writing (N = 8)	38%*	"Getting Critique" (75%); "Reading Professional Works," (50%); "Observing the World" (50%); "Training in Techniques" (50%)

Table 3: Spring Pre-Course Survey Results for "what helps" broken out by prior course completion

*Students in this group likely represent a highly selective group. Those who choose to take two creative writing courses in their first-year of college likely identify already as creative writers, with their own practices out of class.

There is a difference in the sample sizes (N) for each group. Yet, it seems students were transferring prior knowledge of the writing process from composition courses to their expectations for creative writing. In doing so, they increasingly devalued "inspiration." Students also esteemed "getting critique from peers," which many would have experienced in peer review in composition. It is interesting that those who had only completed English 101 rated more things more highly. Were the 102-completers more jaded, or had some tested into 102 and missed out on learning some writing process knowledge (or had more time passed since they experienced a writing course?) To investigate more closely, I selected three students from the Fall group to examine. I choose three who had

completed all of the IRB paperwork and who had turned in all assignment components—so it was not a random sample but a practical one. In Fall, students kept a collaborative journal for the first half of the semester and then continued with individual journals, due at the end of the course for participation points. Names are pseudonyms.

Case 1: Janelle

Janelle came into the course as an experienced writer who had completed English 102 already and wrote poetry on her own—and could do so with emotion-evoking details as I observed in a freewriting section of the pre-course survey. She completed her individual journal of observations and seems to have learned from the activity, reporting in a final reflective letter, unprompted, that she drew on her journal to develop final portfolio pieces. On the survey, Janelle upped her rating for the usefulness of the journal, from "not that helpful" pre course to "helpful" post course and wrote about writing from real life as being helpful on a write-in question in the survey. Her learning can also be seen in the comparison of two comments from her pre and post course surveys:

Pre-course, she wrote: "I think that being in the right mood to write has been the most helpful in the past and I think that the one that will help most in this class is probably getting critiques from peers or training in specific techniques."

Post-course, she wrote: "I think writing from real life helped the most. Both of my poems were grounded in real life and I think that the journal entries that we did earlier in the semester really helped with writing my poems. I think in the past the most helpful was being in the mood to write just because it's so hard to get inspired when you are not in the mood to write."

With her strong writing background, Janelle brought to the course the prior knowledge of writing processes (that getting critique could help) and that writing can be taught and learned (she looked forward to instruction). At the end of the course, she chose to comment on the usefulness of writing from real life—which may not mean she did not find getting critique or specific instruction to be as useful as she thought, but that she had learned a new writing process technique—writing from real life—that she hadn't been expecting to learn and that had helped her develop final pieces. Understanding that writing is a process and that writing can be taught likely laid the groundwork for that gain.

Case 2: Nicholas

Like Janelle, Nicholas was also a practicing creative writer before he came into the course, with the ability to write with emotion-evoking detail (as I observed from his pre-course survey freewriting). Yet, he had not yet taken a college-level Composition course. He had tested into English 102 but wasn't going to take it until Spring. He was taking Introduction to Creative Writing in Fall of his first-year, without any other English courses concurrently.

Nicholas also completed his individual journal as assigned and reported, unprompted, that the journal had helped him to develop at least one piece in his final portfolio. Yet, he was less taken with the journaling than Janelle was. He did not change his answer on keeping a journal from the pre to post-course surveys. Both times he saw it as (merely) "helpful." He even downgraded his answer for the helpfulness of "observing the world" (a category related to the kind of journal keeping we did) from "extremely" in the pre-course survey to just "helpful" in the post-course survey.

Notably, Nicholas had written with passion in his pre-course survey that he already found writing from real life to be important. Rather than being so impressed by journaling, then, Nicholas wrote in the post-course survey about the helpfulness of being in the right mood to write, as well as knowing he had an audience and getting critique from peers. Not having taken a prior college composition course—in which most students experience an audience of peers—Nicholas experienced peer review or workshop for the first time and seems to have most learned from that. In his post-course survey he downgraded "giving critique" and "observing the world" from "extremely helpful" to "helpful" and upgraded "getting critique" as well as "having an audience" from "helpful" to "extremely" helpful." He wrote:

> Being in the right mood in the past is what has helped me the most with writing. With the content I tend to write, mood is very important in how it comes off and is what helps develop ideas the best in my mind. Knowing someone will read my writing and provide feedback helps me the most in this class. Having confidence and knowing if something I'm writing is actually good is something I've been looking for and this class provides that very well in the way I hoped it would.

Again these case studies support Light's observations that students emerge from creative writing courses having learned different things. The close look at student learning about writing further keeps with Hassel and Giordano's description of the "blurry borders" that surround first-year composition in general, with students placing into credit-bearing courses with varieties of skill in different learning outcome areas (and varieties of deficit of skill). It is true that writing skills do not necessarily need to be taught in a certain sequence. Yet it is notable that Nicholas learned something from the creative writing course—about the role of readers—that he may have learned from a composition course first. Janelle had already learned the importance of having readers. Had Nicholas completed a prior course with peer review or workshop, would his final take-away from the creative writing course have focused on some other avenue of learning more specific to creative writing craft (and not writing in general)? At the same time, Nicholas came in with prior knowledge about the powerful generation tool of writing from real life, and seemingly from his own life experiences—the knowledge that had been new and most remarkable to Janelle post course.

The third case offers more light on the role of prior learning:

Case 3: Daniel

Daniel did not enter the course with as much prior experience with writing or with college-level composition courses as Janelle and Nicholas. His pre-course survey writing sample showed some familiarity with creating setting and story in fiction, but not use of specific details to create emotion. He had completed English 098, a semester-long non-degree credit developmental reading and writing course the previous year and was taking English 101 concurrently. He had taken a supplemental non-degree writing support course the Spring before. (Notably, I had given Daniel special permission to take creative writing concurrently with English 101, normally the pre-requisite. He did have an interest in world-building and game development.)

While Daniel was eager to learn, his lack of prior knowledge about writing can be seen in his pre-course survey answers. At the beginning of the course he thought not being graded, freewriting without a prompt, and being inspired would spur the most creativity (while he allowed prompts, deadlines and critique might help—or might at least serve the needs of a classroom environment). By the end of the semester he did not complete the

journal as assigned but confessed to making all of the entries the night before it was due (without much awareness that this defeated the process-related purpose) and, not surprisingly, did not change his rating from the the pre- to post-course surveys of keeping a journal as "not that helpful." At the same time, Daniel's knowledge of writing processes was developing through the creative writing course: he did change his rating for "writing from real life" to "helpful," up from "not helpful, and by course end saw "freewriting with no prompt" as less helpful ("not very") while "freewriting with a prompt" as even more ("extremely") helpful, showing he'd learned to use processes of some kind—drawing on real life or writing from an external prompt—rather than rely solely on inspiration (suggested to me by the activity of "freewriting without a prompt"). The change in understanding about the usefulness of prompts suggests emerging understanding of the concept that writing can be taught (and learned). Like Nicholas, Daniel also upgraded his rating for getting peer critique by the end of the course (from "helpful" to "extremely helpful,") and chose to write about the role of getting critique in the post-course survey:

> Getting critique was by far the best one. Getting feedback on what you did gives you insight into your writing process. Things that you strive to do might be unnoticed while things you did accidentally might have been your greatest asset. This was best way to help me improve as a creative writer.

Daniel learned about the writing process in general and the value of feedback—which is certainly a win. Might he have learned more creative-writing specific knowledge if he'd completed English 101 first, and thus laid that groundwork? At the same time, perhaps his awareness of the role of serendipity in artistic creation ("things you did accidentally") represents highly sophisticated learning about the writing process that is somewhat more specific to creative writing. It would be interesting to know how the creative writing course deepened his learning in his concurrent English 101 class, and his subsequent English 102 course.

These observations about the role and transfer of learning into creative writing courses from prior and concurrent composition courses (and life experiences) have implications for creative writing instructors contemplating course pre-requisites or designing introductory creative writing courses. Additionally, especially in an open access institution like mine, these results may have implications for teachers anticipating first-year students' incoming knowledge, which may even differ among Fall and Spring semester groups, with Spring students more likely to have completed at least one college level writing course that employed writing process activities such as peer

review. On the whole, students' transfer-in of knowledge from composition suggests future avenues of exploration for those interested in developing robust creative writing pedagogies.

Result 3) Creative nonfiction writing assignments help introductory creative writing students learn skills of generation

Here is where I must admit that the results from my pre and post semester surveys do not indicate a resounding "yes" in answer to my research question about the usefulness of keeping a journal of observations for unlearning the myth of inspiration. Yet, another more broad activity emerges as one that may have served that goal."

First, and dishearteningly, comparing pre- and post-course surveys suggests little overall change in student beliefs from the larger Spring cohort about the writing process after a semester of learning and practice. The same items seen as most helpful to writers at the beginning of the course (across the four sections surveyed) remain in the top four at the end, with "being inspired" and "being the right mood to write" even appearing to rise to the top two positions—though it is only the case that other top two ("getting critique" and "observing the world") fall slightly in Spring from "extremely" to merely "helpful."

	1. Observing the World	2. Getting Critique from Peers	3. Being Inspired	4. Being in the Right Mood to Write
Spring 2017 (N = 82)	"extremely helpful" 63% "helpful" 33%	"extremely helpful" 63% "helpful" 33%	"extremely helpful" 61% "helpful" 38%	"extremely helpful" 55% "helpful" 38%

	1. Being Inspired	2. Being in the Right Mood to Write	3. Getting Critique from Peers	4. Observing the world
Spring 2017 post (N = 48)	"extremely helpful 62%; "helpful" 36%	"extremely helpful" 62%; "helpful" 34%	"extremely helpful" 57% "helpful" 34%	"extremely helpful" 43% "helpful" 55%

Table 4: Spring pre and post-course survey top four beliefs

Perhaps this represents some jading about learning as the academic year goes on (just as Spring pre-surveys rated fewer things as highly as Fall pre-surveys). And again, my sample sizes are small, with individual difference and outliers possibly influencing all of the results.

Yet, my data does shed some light in answer to my research question when I break out my section of collaborative journaling students from the group as a whole, if it does not give a resounding yes to the specific activity of journaling observations. While my sample size of participating students at the end of my course was small (11 students), "writing from real life" and "reading professional works" did break into the top four of my students' post-course beliefs about what was "helpful" for writers—and "being inspired" does not appear. (Like the larger group, my students continued to value "getting critique" and "being in the right mood to write.") (See Table 5.)

	1. Writing from real life	2. Being in the Right Mood to Write	3. Getting Critique from Peers	4. Reading Professional Works
Spring 2017 post beliefs Stukenberg's collaborative journalers (N = 11)	"extremely helpful" 73%; "helpful" 27%	"extremely helpful" 73%; "18%	"extremely helpful" 64%; "helpful" 27%	"extremely helpful" 55%; "helpful" 45%

Table 5: Top Spring post-course beliefs from Stukenberg's section of collaborative journalers

While "writing from real life" made an appearance in the top four for my journaling students, I should note that "keeping a journal" did not, nor did "observing the world" (which I intended as a second way of nosing around about the journaling). None of my 11 students in their post-course survey selected journaling as "extremely helpful." 81% of my students *did* rate it as "helpful" in the post-course survey, which was higher than for the whole

group of all survey takers, where 68% saw "keeping a journal" as "helpful" and 23% thought it would be "not that helpful."[3]

On the whole, then, in comparison to the larger group, my students had changed different end perceptions about "writing from real life" (valuing it more) and the role of inspiration (valuing it less), and yet this didn't seem to be strongly connected to the collaborative journaling. This was when I reflected on another difference between my course and my colleagues' that particular semester: the emphasis in mine on creative nonfiction, which composed half of our course that spring: not only did my students make observations for our collaborative journal, but they were assigned to write in the genre of creative nonfiction in the second half of the class.

My students are often surprised by creative nonfiction—that it exists as a genre, by its variety of forms and play with forms. Their new awareness and creative nonfiction's popularity in the current cultural moment might account for the power and learning gains they find in "writing from real life." Yet Crystal Fodrey offers another intriguing answer—which connects with my observation of student transfer of learning from composition courses.

Fodrey surveys the pedagogical landscape of creative nonfiction as it is taught in composition and in creative writing courses and offers intriguing summations, including about the way the material fits differently within the different contexts of the courses. Fodrey observes how in first-year composition, creative nonfiction—with its emphasis on a student's "I," and its esteem for personal experience—can have power for students by offering them agented positionality in the public world. In this way, Fodrey says, creative nonfiction assignments stand out from other academic writing assignments. At the same time, creative nonfiction is unique in the creative writing classroom as a genre that prompts students to contemplate rhetorical situation; questions of how the writer presents the self, and to what audience, and for what purposes arise more directly when writing creative nonfiction than poetry or fiction. Through Fodrey's description of creative nonfiction as a species that can live in both worlds of first-year writing and creative writing (while offering something new to each), creative nonfiction also appears as a potentially

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[3] I didn't require students to develop all of their pieces for their small-group workshops and final portfolios *only* from the collaborative journal—so others may have found their own methods of generation, or other methods of generation that we tried in class, to be more helpful. Further, I am not able to break out my students from the Spring pre-course survey of all students, so it is possible that my group as a whole also started with different regard for these activities than the group as a whole—though Fall and Spring pre-course surveys showed general consistency in the top activities seen as valuable by students.

powerful conduit for helping students transfer their learning from one site to the other, thus deepening their overall gains in understanding threshold concepts shared by both disciplines, such as that writing is activity (Adler-Kassner and Wardle)—and that it does not arise fully formed from inspiration.

In short, perhaps my students' seemingly greater change in learning to devalue inspiration was due to connections they could make between my creative writing classroom and their prior composition learning, and through creative nonfiction assignments. Whether or not they had been assigned creative nonfiction in composition —and our UW Colleges first-year composition curriculum emphasized academic over narrative writing—this type of writing that invokes a rhetorical situation would have been familiar, thus promoting transfer of other concepts about writing, including those about process. In my Introduction to Creative Writing course, I try to disrupt assumptions students bring with them from first-year writing. I insist we call small group discussion of drafts in progress "workshop" rather than "peer review," and (to the enjoyment of students who had me for English 101) mock explicit thesis statements and overt transitions. Yet we must also tap the rich learning about writing in general that students bring with them from first-year composition to Introduction to Creative Writing classrooms. My result #2 and case studies demonstrate transfer of learning from first-year composition. Whether or not English 101 courses include creative nonfiction or narrative assignments, teaching creative nonfiction in Introduction to Creative Writing, because of its familiar-to-students assumptions of a rhetorical situation, can be a strong conduit for the transfer of learning of multiple threshold concepts of writing, including those related to writing process.

Conclusion

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning projects are important tools in the development and discussion of creative writing pedagogy, particularly for understudied introductory level courses. My project can remind teacher-scholars of the power of the prevailing attitudes with which students enter our courses, as well as prompt more investigation into how to tap students' prior learning from first-year composition. I hope future studies will explore how Introduction to Creative Writing courses help students make gains in other college writing assignments, or further examine the use of creative nonfiction as a bridge to or from other writing contexts.

I'd like to end with reflection about how SoTL projects, as they invite us to see student learning "anew," can also be transformative for the teacher-scholar conducting the research. For their last journal contribution, I asked students to respond to the prompt: "In what ways has this journal contributed to your development of your pieces for this class, or your understanding of writing process?" Grouping their responses by theme shows what they learned from journaling in addition to generating ideas. (See Table 6.)

Top themes of learning from the collaborative journal described by students	
Helped me to generate ideas	64% (7 students)
Inspired me	27% (3 students)
Promoted diversity/understanding new perspectives	27% (3 students)
Promoted understanding creativity as finding/combining/collaborating	27% (3 students)
Promoted understanding creativity as originality	18% (2 students)
Fostered class connections	18% (2 students)
Helped me notice the world	18% (2 students)

Table 6: Top themes of learning described by students (with some responses addressing multiple themes)

Looking at these themes—especially "inspired me"—helped me rethink some of my own assumptions, not the least my poo-pooing of the word *inspiration*. I can't fault students for enjoying that heady rush of feeling inspired, or ready to work, in those moments when it happens. Further, at least one student comment led me to reexamine my own surety that students' high ratings for "feeling inspired" necessarily meant they were thinking what I feared they were thinking—that creativity descends like a lightning bolt. In her final journal post, one student wrote "While reading them [the journals] I was usually able to be inspired by someone else's response and it would stir a memory of my own and help me to write something better." Another wrote, "This journal helped me examine my surroundings for inspiration…". Finally, the third who mentioned "inspiration" wrote, "Usually when I'm not feeling it, I just give up and wait for inspiration to strike, but sometimes inspiration is waiting in the drop of ink if you just give it a chance." Some students did unlearn myths of inspiration while still using the language of inspiration to discuss their process—which is just the kind of complexity that marks our craft.

Acknowledgement

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Appendix A: Pre and Post Survey Question Rating Activities that Help Writers:

Which of the following are helpful for creative writers?

Reading professional works:

1	2	3	4
Possibly harmful	not that helpful	helpful	extremely helpful

Getting critique from peers:

1	2	3	4
Possibly harmful	not that helpful	helpful	extremely helpful

Not being graded:

1	2	3	4
Possibly harmful	not that helpful	helpful	extremely helpful

Being inspired:

1	2	3	4
Possibly harmful	not that helpful	helpful	extremely helpful

Keeping a journal:

1	2	3	4
Possibly harmful	not that helpful	helpful	extremely helpful

Writing from real life:

1	2	3	4
Possibly harmful	not that helpful	helpful	extremely helpful

Writing multiple drafts:

1	2	3	4
Possibly harmful	not that helpful	helpful	extremely helpful

Freewriting with no prompt:

1	2	3	4
Possibly harmful	not that helpful	helpful	extremely helpful

Freewriting with a prompt:

1	2	3	4
Possibly harmful	not that helpful	helpful	extremely helpful

Being in the right mood to write:

1	2	3	4
Possibly harmful	not that helpful	helpful	extremely helpful

Giving critique to peers:

1	2	3	4
Possibly harmful	not that helpful	helpful	extremely helpful

Having deadlines:

1	2	3	4

Possibly harmful   not that helpful   helpful   extremely helpful

Observing the world:
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
Possibly harmful   not that helpful   helpful   extremely helpful

Having an audience/knowing someone will read the writing:
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
Possibly harmful   not that helpful   helpful   extremely helpful

Training in specific techniques (like using dialogue in a story or line breaks in a poem):
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
Possibly harmful   not that helpful   helpful   extremely helpful