LIVED SCHOOL EXPERIENCES THAT ENCOURAGED ONE PERSON TO BECOME A CREATIVE WRITER

by

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Abstract

In the hermeneutic phenomenological tradition, I explored through interviews this research question: What, if any, experiences in school encouraged one person to become an adult creative writer? The literature and curriculum guides for language arts address how to teach poetry and fiction writing, providing direction for students and teachers. But do creative writing activities in school stand as examples of lived school experiences that encouraged the participant? As a poet, novelist, and short story writer, I naturally have thoughts and beliefs about what activities or events in school encouraged me to become a creative writer; therefore, I attempted prior to the interviews to bracket out my biases related to those thoughts and beliefs. I worked closely with the participant and my Supervisory Committee members to analyse emerging themes and to reduce researcher bias. Eight themes emerged from the data about what lived school experiences encouraged the participant. Recommendations based on those themes provide direction for educators. This study could serve as a prototype for further research that explores what, if any, school experiences have encouraged other people to become creative writers.
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Introduction

I conducted conversational interviews with a successful Canadian poet. His work has appeared in many of Canada’s elite literary journals, and he writes a regular poetry column for an established publication. He lives and works in a small Canadian city, and he has obtained a formal university education at the bachelor and graduate levels. I call him Arthur to protect his anonymity, and I interviewed him about what, if any, lived school experiences had encouraged him to become a creative writer.

I speak of school experiences in terms of elementary and high school as opposed to college and university. I speak of the creative writer as one who engages in what I call creative writing. Although I believe that generally all writing is creative--in fact, I believe that generally all thinking is creative (Smith, 1990)--I do not want to dwell on those ontological premises. I define creative writing in the same way many others define it:

Creative writing is writing that expresses the writer's thoughts and feelings in an imaginative, often unique, and poetic way. Creative writing is guided more by the writer's need to express feelings and ideas than by restrictive demands of factual and logical progression of expository writing. (What is Creative Writing?, 1999)

In the words of distinguished novelist Ernest J. Gaines, creative writing is “imaginative writing....Though the creative writer draws from factual sources, sociology, psychology, politics, religion, etc.,...he should use all of that information imaginatively--never factually” (Gaines, n.d.). Creative writing, then, conveys feelings and personal ideas more than information, as opposed to expository writing, which conveys information more than feelings and personal ideas (What is Expository Writing?, 1999).
School experiences had existed that had encouraged the participant to become a creative writer, and the exploratory nature of this study (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997; Patton, 1987; van Manen, 1990) sought to describe, in the hermeneutic phenomenological sense, themes that emerged from those experiences.

In Chapter Two, I review a variety of curriculum guides, Web sites, teachers’ handbooks, how-to writing books, and other sources that contain direction for students and teachers of creative writing. Traditionally, creative writing stands as a relevant topic in the world of language arts, and much direction exits in the literature for students and teachers. I wanted to determine whether Arthur would describe creative writing activities as examples of lived school experiences that had encouraged him to take up creative writing later in life.

Generally, research in the human sciences has proceeded on a structured, quantitative course of experimentation, statistics, and “hard, real” (Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 6) knowledge. Quantitative researchers consider this “hard” knowledge as “objective and [statistically] tangible” (p. 6). This epistemological assumption gives the researcher “an observer role” (p. 6). This qualitative study, however, focussed on knowledge as “a softer, more subjective... kind, based on experience and insight of a unique and essentially personal nature” (p. 6).

Rather than choosing “from a range of traditional options--surveys, experiments, and the like” (Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 7), I chose, for this study, “from a comparable range of recent and emerging techniques--accounts, participant observation and personal constructs, for example” (p. 7). I looked at “personal constructs” in terms of phenomenology, in particular, in terms of “the phenomena of experience rather than by
external, objective and physically described reality” (p. 20) as found in traditional, quantitative research. My choices stood logically affixed to the phenomenological nature of my research question.

At the proposal stage, I had planned not to conduct a comprehensive literature review of sources that describe first hand school experiences that had encouraged people to become creative writers until I had completed an analysis and interpretation of the data. I referred to this review as a suspended literature review. I did not want to inadvertently bias myself. In view of the hermeneutic phenomenological nature of this study, I was following van Manen’s (1990) advice: “If one examines existing human science texts at the very outset then it may be more difficult to suspend one’s interpretive understanding of the phenomenon. It is sound practice to attempt to address the phenomenological meaning of a phenomenon on one’s own first” (p. 76).

To not “suspend one’s interpretive understanding” could have increased the possibility of researcher bias, thereby casting doubt on the truth of themes that emerged from the data through researcher analysis and interpretation. Even my use of “participant review” (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997, p. 407) and "peer debrief[ing]” (p. 409) might not dispel a reader’s doubt. Van Manen argues:

The problem of phenomenological inquiry is not always that we know too little about the phenomenon we wish to investigate, but that we know too much. Or, more accurately, the problem is that our “common sense” pre-understandings, our suppositions, assumptions, and the existing bodies of scientific knowledge, predispose us to interpret the nature of the phenomenon before we have even come to grips with the significance of the phenomenological question. (p. 46)
Suspended literature review texts that would support or contradict relevant themes in the lived experience of the participant, I decided, would appear throughout the completed study’s conclusions and recommendations sections. This is common qualitative practise. Often, qualitative researchers “present literature discussions and integrate criticism of the literature into the text of a study” (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997, p. 119) rather than present a literature-review-only section “because the traditional format of qualitative research is that of a narrative” (p. 147); however, my suspended literature review revealed no hermeneutic phenomenological studies that relate to my research question.

That narrative, or narrative river, does not travel between the banks of a foreshadowed problem that forks into the specific, a narrower trough—a condensed problem statement. Many qualitative researchers “begin with foreshadowed problems, ... anticipated research problems that will be reformulated during data collection” (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997, p. 102). Reformulated research problems may become a condensed problem statement that “focuses the entire report” (p. 103). Hermeneutic phenomenology, however, allows for no forks in the narrative river. That means that I did not ask other valid research questions such as “Were there any lived school experiences that discouraged you from taking up creative writing later in life?”

McMillan and Schumacher (1997) tell us that “phenomenology [given birth by Husserl (van Manen, 1990)] provides an understanding of a concept from the participants' views of their social realities” (p. 395 [italics added]). I wished to study “a concept,” the possibility that lived school experiences had encouraged one person to take up creative writing later in life. “Phenomenological questions are meaning questions. They ask for
the meaning and significance of certain phenomena” (van Manen, 1990, p. 23). The research question became my study’s foundation in the sense that I “select[ed] or invent[ed] appropriate research methods, techniques, and procedures for a particular problem or question” (p. 30). My selections or inventions helped protect me from “temptations to get side-tracked or to wander aimlessly and indulge in wishy-washy speculations, to settle for preconceived opinions and conceptions, to become enchanted with narcissistic reflections or self-indulgent preoccupations” (van Manen, 1990, p. 33).

My goal to get to the essence of the research question became a matter of my methodological security. I had to stand “constantly mindful of [the] original question and thus to be steadfastly oriented to the lived experience” (van Manen, 1990, p. 42) of the participant. Methodology and the research question became congruent. In other words, “it is methodologically important to keep one’s fundamental research question foremost in mind” (p. 166 [italics added]).

Sometimes, the topic of research “formulates a problem” (McIntyre, n.d., Topic and Problematic, para. 1) that merits investigation, and that problem is “turned into a question” (Gerbner, n.d., para. 1); however, the exploratory nature (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997) of this study did not require the existence of a problem. In terms of hermeneutic phenomenology, the study explored and interpreted “how things appear[ed]” (van Manen, 1990, p. 180). The very nature of this kind of study created suspense, or wonder, for me. I hope it creates the same for the reader:

In his or her phenomenological description the researcher/writer must “pull” the reader into the question in such a way that the reader cannot help but wonder about the nature of the phenomenon.... One might say that a phenomenological
questioning teaches the reader to wonder, to question deeply the very thing that is being questioned by the question. (van Manen, 1990, p. 44)

This phenomenological questioning describes “the more subjectivist...approach” (Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 7), from which the researcher sees “the social world as being of a much softer, personal and humanly-created kind” (p, 7), whereas traditional social science describes “an objectivist...approach” (p. 7), from which the researcher sees “the social world...as being hard, real and external to the individual” (p. 7).

As a teacher of creative writing, I have tended to see the world through subjectivist lenses. In view of a review of the literature on hermeneutic phenomenology that has turned up nothing about creative writing, I believe that interviewing a participant, a subjectivist approach, has enabled me to establish a body of useful direction for teachers. That direction relates to activities in school that may encourage some students to become poets, fiction writers, or dramatists. I discuss that direction and pedagogical implications in my recommendations, but first it is necessary to conduct a review of literature that establishes traditional direction for students and teachers of creative writing.
Literature Related to the Teaching of Creative Writing

The British Columbia Ministry of Education (hereafter, The Ministry) deems the teaching of creative writing a relevant topic to which it refers repeatedly, either implicitly or explicitly, in three of its curriculum guides (1996a, 1996b, 1996c). For example, The Ministry (1996a) implies relevance when it states, "It is expected that [kindergarten and grade one] students will enhance the precision, clarity, and artistry of their communications by using processes that professional authors...use to appraise and improve their communications" (p. 24), and The Ministry (1996b) explicates relevance when, for grade nine students, it states "students will...create a variety of personal [and] literary...communications, including poems [and] stories" (p. 48). I wondered whether Arthur would describe creative writing activities as examples of lived school experiences that had encouraged him to become a creative writer.

Publishers of language arts programs, motivated by profit to sell their texts, produce teachers' handbooks that reflect ministry directives. I reviewed seven handbooks used by the school district in which I work that cover language arts programs from grades one to seven (see Best, et al., 1998; Bogusat, et al., 1999; Booth, Booth, Phenix, & Swartz, 1991; Jeroski & Dockendorf, 2000; Sterling & Toutant, 1999; Tuinman, Neuman, & Rich, 1988; Tuinman, Neuman, & Rich, 1989). All reflect ministry directives. For example, the Nelson Language Arts: Teacher's Guide: Levels B and C, for grade one, directs teachers to help student writers to become "familiar with a wide variety of genres and forms" (Sterling & Toutant, 1999, p. 29), which brings to mind The Ministry's (1996b) requirement that "students will...create a variety of personal [and] literary...communications, including poems [and] stories" (p. 48). The Nelson Language
Arts: Teacher’s Guide: 6, for grade six, directs teachers to help student poets to focus attention on their “thoughts, feelings, ideas, and personal experiences” (Best, et al., 1998, p. 33), which reminds me of statements such as students need to “respond to ideas, feelings and knowledge...creatively” (The Ministry, 1996a, 1996b, 1996c, p. 5). I wondered whether Arthur would describe lived school experiences that relate to this information.

I also reviewed a variety of Web sites, how-to writing books, and other sources that contain a wealth of direction for students and teachers of creative writing, but rather than my simply synthesizing for the reader the information from these sources into a statement (e.g., traditionally, creative writing stands as a relevant topic in the world of language arts, and much direction exits in the literature for students and teachers of creative writing), I wanted to offer the reader possibilities about what school experiences might have encouraged the participant to take up creative writing. For example, would Arthur describe lived school experiences that relate to the wealth of information I reviewed?

This type of presentation is not unusual in hermeneutic phenomenological studies. Phenomenological questioning should teach “the reader to wonder, to question...the [research] question. Sometimes this involves avoiding posing the question outright because such straightforward approach would [could] lead the reader to...underestimate its probing nature” (van Manen, 1990, p. 44). I posed the question outright, but I encourage the reader not to “underestimate its probing nature” by wondering about related questions such as this one: Do writing activities in school that motivate students to write creatively encourage some to pursue creative writing?
In the tradition of hermeneutic phenomenology, my discussion tries to prompt the reader to wonder about possibilities. If *bracketing* is a process for “suspending one’s various beliefs” (van Manen, 1990, p. 175) or biases, then *bracketing in possibilities*, a term I coined, is a process--which, in this case, draws on literature related to the teaching of creative writing--that addresses possible participant responses to enlarge the depth and breadth of the reader’s wonder over the research question.

*Bracketing in Possibilities*

I referred to creative writing Web sites, which contain essentially the same sorts of activities as do print materials (see, e.g., *About Teens*, n.d.; Horner & Khan, n.d.; Love, n.d.a; and Shiney & Shiney, n.d.). In my experience, many teachers look to the myriad number of excellent Web site activities for teaching creative writing. I wondered whether Arthur would refer to the kinds of activities found on Web sites.

Some print materials provide very specific examples of creative writing activities (see, e.g., Strom, Ingraham, & Dunnett, 1993). I wondered whether Arthur would describe any creative writing activities that were very, very specific as ones that had encouraged him to take up creative writing.

I, like many others, have written a creative writing course available in print (Lukiv, 1997) that presents many assignments that show students how to develop various creative writing skills. Would Arthur refer to assignments similar to the ones in my course?

Many books for students of creative writing provide excellent suggestions about how to make characters in poetry or fiction seem “alive” (see, e.g., Leavitt, 1970, p. 15). Others present how-to-use-point-of-view exercises (see, e.g., Leavitt & Sohn, 1979).
Some books create programs that work so well that many of the students "have consistently won prizes in top writing competitions and been published in national magazines and books" (Thomley, 1976, back cover). Other texts provide a wealth of excellent how-to direction for creative writing students and teachers of creative writing (see, e.g., Bickham, 1996; Block, 1979; Bryant, 1978; Clark, Brohaugh, Woods, Strickland, & Blocksom, 1992; Dessner, 1979; Dickson & Smythe, 1970; Drury, 1991; Fredette, 1988; Hall, 1989; Irwin & Eyerly, 1988; Jones, 1978; Powell, 1973; Roberts, 1981; Seuling, 1991; Wakan, 1993; and Wyndham, 1972). Would Arthur mention excellent how-to direction about how to write as an example of an activity that had encouraged him to continue learning the art and craft of writing?

Jerome (1980) and Birney’s (1966) rich and deep analyses of what poetry is keeps me rereading their texts. Would Arthur describe rich and deep analyses of creative writing in school as examples of experiences that had encouraged him? Hodgins (1993) describes a school experience of being read to by a teacher that encouraged him to become a writer of fiction. I relate to that experience because I had similar ones. Would Arthur describe similar ones too?

Birney (1966), however, suggests school discourages some potential creative writers. In some cases they feel forced, he says, to drop out of high school to learn elsewhere the art and craft of creative writing. Is it not ironic that language arts curriculums that are supposed to teach creative writing might frustrate potential creative writers? Would Arthur say that no school experiences had encouraged him to take up creative writing later in life? I want to say here that I did not think that would be the case. I had already separately approached two creative writers to ask, "Did any experiences in
elementary and high school encourage you to become a creative writer?" Both
immediately said, "Yes!"

Still, I wondered what lived school experiences might have discouraged people
from becoming creative writers. I wondered whether The Ministry's approved resources
for senior high school students that mechanistically chop up stories into bits of escapism,
interpretation, plot, theme, character, point of view, symbolism, and irony (see, e.g.,
Perrine, 1966; and Ball, 1969) or into bits of subject, verb, verbal, adverb, adjective,
noun, pronoun, conjunction, preposition, phrase, clause, antecedent, sentence fragment,
object, infinitive, and punctuation (see, e.g., Hart & Heim, 1982; and Shaw, 1986)
discourage students from becoming poets, fiction writers, and dramatists. But my
wondering did not preclude Arthur from saying that chopping up stories and language the
way these books do had been just the sort of activity that had encouraged him to take up
creative writing.

Knott (1977) discusses how to submit writing to an editor. I used his excellent
book as a text in 1978 and 1979 to teach two creative writing courses through one school
district's Continuing Education Department. I wondered whether Arthur would mention
school activities that had taught him how to go about sending submissions to editors.

Teachers have motivated students to write in school through publishing
adventures (see, e.g., Lamb, 1984; Love, n.d.b; Lukiv, 2001a; and Lukiv, in press).
Would Arthur say that classroom publication had motivated him to write and that that
experience had encouraged him to further study creative writing?

I developed Story Day (Lukiv, in press) over twenty years ago, basing it on
intuitions I have recently come to learn are elements of social constructivism (McCarthy
& Raphael, 1992; and Ruddell & Unrau, 1994) and Vygotskian theory (Berk & Winsler, 1995; Hicks, 1996; and Vygotsky, 1978). My primary students knew that I was a published creative writer, and they often requested that I read my work for children to them. Sometimes I read one of my own works during Story Day to model a writing concept that I was trying to teach them. In 1999—and I speak anecdotally (van Manen, 1990, pp. 115-121)—I met one of those students. He said he had loved my story about "those creatures that stunk." I had rewritten that story into a novel called *Quibils and Quirks* (1997, 1998, 1999), which I told him about. After that conversation, although I knew that, as Jobe (1982) says, "classroom teachers can have more influence on their students' reading habits by showing that they themselves are active readers," I could not say with conviction that the same applies to writing. But I have recently learned from Spandel and Stiggins (1997) that "research shows that teachers of writing, if they wish to be effective, must write themselves (Graves, 1983; Murray, 1985; Atwell, 1987)" (p. 170). Was Arthur encouraged through contact with a teacher who was himself or herself a creative writer?

In addition to "Story Day: A Theoretical Model for Teaching Creative Writing in the Elementary Grades" (Lukiv, in press), much literature attempts to motivate students to write poetry, fiction, and drama (see, e.g., Cleveland Public Schools, 1968; Dyson, 1987; Matthews, 1981; Pennsylvania State Department of Education, 1975; and Potter, McCormick, & Busching, 2001). Amabile (1985) found poetry written through extrinsic motivation is much less creative than poetry written through intrinsic motivation.

Extrinsic motivation, based on students' need for "an external reward [such as praise or good grades] for performing activity" (Stipek, 1998, p. 127) clearly differs from
intrinsic motivation, based on students’ need for “competence, novelty, and autonomy” (p. 129) while performing an activity. I wondered, would Arthur mention activities that had addressed intrinsic motivation (Stipek, 1998) as examples that had encouraged him to take up creative writing?

That question, and other questions and thoughts I have referred to in this subsection, helps me bracket in possibilities. They focus attention on the topic of teaching creative writing, and they help to highlight my research question: What, if any, lived school experiences encouraged the participant to become a creative writer?
Methodology

Van Manen (1990) helps us understand that although “hermeneutic phenomenological research is fundamentally a writing activity” (p. 7), it is more than that. It is a method of understanding “the unique, ... the personal, the individual” (p. 7). As a writer--poet, novelist, and short story writer--and teacher, this methodology fits my interest in creative writing and in what people think and feel, but, in particular, this methodology fits my interest in what lived experiences in school have encouraged people to become creative writers.

Given these interests of mine, I logically employed "purposeful sampling" (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997, p. 397) as a method to choose a participant.

Sampling

I studied Arthur’s experiences. I might have considered the unique and personal experiences of more than one person, and that would have opened the gate to comparisons and contrasts of themes that might have arisen. Bogdan and Biklan (1992), however, recommend that a new researcher’s case study involve “a detailed examination of...a single subject” (p. 62) because that is generally “easier to accomplish than... multisubject studies” (p. 62). Additionally, in terms of limited time to complete this study, I note Patton’s (1987) suggestion to limit the size of the case study. Therefore, in view of these author’s comments, and in view of hermeneutic phenomenology’s focus on the individual, on his or her lived experiences, purposeful sampling of one participant seemed sensible and appropriate.

My goal, of course, was a systematic approach, a systematic methodology, to study those lived experiences.
A Systematic Approach

Hermeneutic phenomenology focusses on the unique, the personal, the individual (van Manen, 1990), through the systematic and the explicit. “It is systematic in that it uses specially practised modes of questioning, reflecting, focusing, intuiting” (p. 11). I modified that language to say that my research was systematic in that it used specially practised modes of questioning, analysing, and interpreting. In this chapter I discuss each of those modes, along with bracketing, thereby defining my methodology. Hermeneutic phenomenology is also “explicit in that it attempts to articulate, through the content and form of text, the structures of meaning embedded in lived experience (rather than leaving the meanings implicit as for example in poetry or literary texts)” (p. 11).

Modes of questioning, analysing, and interpreting, according to hermeneutic phenomenological tradition, must protect the researcher’s objectivity and subjectivity. In van Manen’s (1990) words, “objectivity means that the researcher remains true to the object. The researcher becomes in a sense a guardian and a defender of the true nature of the object” (p. 20). In this case “the true nature of the object” means the true nature of the participant’s lived experience. As for subjectivity, van Manen says it means that one needs to be as perceptive, insightful, and discerning as one can be in order to show or disclose the object in its full richness and in its greatest depth. Subjectivity means that we are strong in our orientation to the object of study in a unique and personal way--while avoiding the danger of becoming arbitrary, self-indulgent, or of getting captivated and carried away by our unreflected preconceptions. (p. 20)
**Questioning techniques.** Researchers, “primarily driven by the need for information” (Taylor, 1990, p. 83), but sometimes driven in the qualitative sense by the need for “knowledge as personal, subjective, and unique” (Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 6), and sometimes driven in the phenomenological sense by the need for “experience taken at face value” (p. 29), often gather data through a “conversational interview” (van Manen, 1990, p. 66). My interviews with Arthur required depth interviewing. Patton (1987) explains that “depth interviewing involves asking open-ended questions” (p. 108) that probe “beneath the surface, soliciting detail and providing a holistic understanding of the interviewee’s point of view” (p. 108).

Why did I conduct an interview as opposed to having the participant write to me? Van Manen (1990) warns that “writing forces the person into a reflective attitude--in contrast to face-to-face conversation in which people are much more immediately involved” (p. 64). I chose not to create a situation in which “this reflective attitude together with the linguistic demands of the writing process” (p. 64) placed “certain constraints on the free obtaining of lived-experience descriptions” (p. 64). I chose instead to use well-established interview methodology.

I kept an “interview guide” (Patton, 1987, p. 111) at hand (see Appendix B). The foundation of that guide was a question: “Could you give me an example of an experience in school that encouraged you to become a creative writer in your adult years?” I included probes, to be used if necessary, to draw out the experience in concrete terms. Patton provides examples: (a) “When did that happen?”, (b) “Who else was involved?”, (c) “Where were you during that time?”, (d) “What was your involvement in that situation?”, (e) “How did that come about?”, and (f) “Where did that happen?” (p. 125).
Questions concerning "the identifying characteristics of the person being interviewed" (Patton, 1987, p. 119) established the participant's past and present engagement as a writer, although, to protect the participant's anonymity (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997), I speak in general rather than specific terms. I do not, for example, name publications in which the participant's poetry has appeared.

Sensory questions in the interview guide were to be used, if necessary, to probe into what the participant had seen, heard, tasted, smelled, and touched (Patton, 1987). Feeling questions in the Carl Rogerian tradition (Egan, 1998) probed in order "to understand the respondent's emotional reactions" (Patton, 1987, p. 118). For example, a Rogerian-style question would be: "Do you mean that you felt (_____ ) about that experience?"

I attempted to keep my questions singular. One problem in interviewing is that "interviewers often throw several questions together and ask them all at once....This is confusing and places an unnecessary and unfair burden of interpretation on the interviewee" (Patton, 1987, p. 124). Hilbert (1998) in her article "The Pain/Pleasure of the Interviewing Process" asks several questions in succession (p. 10). This, I discovered, is a difficulty hard to avoid. In the words of E. Facey, asking several questions at once is "a good example of how hard some of these dictums are to follow when one is in the live situation of interviewing, caught up in the excitement of hearing what the Other has to say" (Personal e-mail, April 18, 2002).

I wanted the participant to feel at ease, relaxedly reflective, and not to worry about a volley of upcoming questions. I wanted the participant to feel at ease for other reasons. I wanted to establish a professional, humanistic--ethical (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997;

Patton (1987) explains that “rapport means that I respect the person being interviewed,...that the respondent’s knowledge, experiences, attitudes, and feelings are important” (p. 127). Patton adds that “neutrality means that the interviewer listens without passing judgment” (p. 127) and the interviewer asks questions that do not have “a built-in response bias that communicates the interviewer’s belief” (p. 129). To be neutral, Patton (1987) tells us, means not to ask leading questions. I coined a phrase, bracketing in possibilities, in the “Introduction” section, which refers to a process that not only helped me to address possible participant responses to my research question, but also helped me address biases that could have affected my neutrality and interview skills. Stated differently, any possibility I expressed in the introduction could have turned into a leading question that, unconscious to me, reflected my belief about an experience that the participant should have had.

To enlarge on this problem of leading questions, I borrow language from quantitative research. McMillan and Schumacher (1997) explain that “experimenter [researcher] effects refer to both deliberate and unintentional influences that the researcher has on the subjects” [participants] (p. 188). The point, according to Patton (1987), is that even unintentional influences in questions would have “a built-in response bias that communicates the interviewer’s belief” (p. 129). To borrow language from Quantum Mechanics, namely the term the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle (Wassermann, 2001/2002), my biased presence would definitely have affected participant response.
Bracketing in possibilities helped me “establish neutrality” (Patton, 1987, p. 128) as an interviewer. Bracketing in possibilities helped me keep leading questions at bay.

*Analysis of data.* Analysis relates to organization: It is “the process of bringing order to the data” (Patton, 1987, p. 144). Prompt analysis seemed prudent:

Some qualitative researchers put primary energy into data collection for weeks, months, or even years and then retire from the field to “work over their notes.” We believe this is a mistake. It rules out the possibility of collecting new data to fill in gaps....It discourages the formulation of “rival hypotheses” that question a field-worker’s routine assumptions and biases....We strongly recommend early analysis. (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 50)

Hermeneutic phenomenology encourages “early analysis,” and, van Manen (1990) says, eventually seeks to “develop a...narrative that explicates themes” (p. 97). It does not seek to “show or prove” (p. 22) the worth of a hypothesis. Instead of the term rival hypotheses, then, hermeneutic phenomenology uses the term “incidental” (p. 107) themes.

The phenomenologist uses the method of free imaginative variation in order to verify whether a theme belongs to a phenomenon essentially (rather than incidentally)....One asks the question: Is this phenomenon still the same if we imaginatively change or delete this theme from the phenomenon? Does the phenomenon without this theme lose its fundamental meaning? (p. 107)

Analysis enabled me to find themes in the data, whereas interpretation, which I discuss at length later, enabled me to define themes as essential or incidental. Analysis began soon after each interview, based on the transcribed interview data (Patton, 1987),
on the "field notes" (p. 92), and on the "contact summary" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 51).

The analysis included memos that I had written to myself. Miles and Huberman (1994) explain that memos “tie together different pieces of data into a recognizable cluster” (p. 72). The analysis included ongoing participant review of data, synthesis of the data, and emerging themes (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997). Van Manen (1990) describes participant review this way: “The researcher can go back [again] and again to the interviewee in order to dialogue with the interviewee about the ongoing record of the interview transcripts” (p. 63).

The analysis also included peer debriefing. McMillan and Schumacher (1997) describe a peer debriefer as “a disinterested colleague who engages in discussions of the researcher’s preliminary analyses” (pp. 409). Any available member of my Supervisory Committee logically made an appropriate peer debriefer. Not only did participant review and peer debriefing help me analyse data—given that I withheld from a peer debriefer any data that betrayed confidentiality—but they also helped me “minimize researcher bias” (p. 409).

I described bracketing in possibilities as a method for addressing bias. Another method for reducing bias, simply called bracketing, a term "borrowed from mathematics by Husserl (1911/80)” (van Manen, 1990, pp. 175-176), deserves explicit attention here because a researcher, especially a new researcher like myself, could be led astray by his or her assumptions (van Manen, 1990):

How does one put out of play everything one knows about an experience that one has selected for study? If we simply try to forget or ignore what we already
“know,” we may find that the presuppositions persistently creep back into our reflections. It is better to make explicit our understandings, beliefs, biases, assumptions, presuppositions, and theories. We try to come to terms with our assumptions, not in order to forget them again, but rather to hold them deliberately at bay. (p. 47)

$\textit{Bracketing out bias.}$ Many experiences in school encouraged me to become a creative writer. These experiences define highlights in my education (Lukiv, 2001b, Chapter Seven; Lukiv, 2001c; Lukiv, 2002), but, simply put, they could have influenced me to ask biased questions. Through my use of “free imaginative variation” (van Manen, 1990, p. 107), I expressed those experiences in terms of one essential, broad theme in my proposal: Events in school that promoted my looking at the world through “different” eyes, through other points of view; that promoted the wonder of creativity; that promoted the joy of my ideas being appreciated; that promoted the excitement of entertaining, or emotionally moving, others; that promoted the excitement of focussed thinking; and that promoted the joy of understanding how to write have encouraged me to become an adult creative writer (Lukiv, 2002). That said, my peer debriefers looked for biases in my questions, in my analysis, and in my interpretations that spoke of $me$ rather than of $Arthur$.

$\textit{Interpretation of data.}$ Interpretation relates to the word hermeneutics, derived from the Greek god Hermes, whose task it was “to communicate messages from Zeus and other gods to the ordinary mortals” (van Manen, 1990, p. 179). Hermeneutics, an intermediary of words, finds a counterpart in Cambodian cosmology in the form of the dances of Asparas. These celestial female dancers “serve as intermediaries between the
sacred and the secular through their dances” (Hamera, 1996, p. 201). In other words, Asparas relates to interpretation.

Patton (1987) says interpretation “involves attaching meaning and significance to the analysis, explaining descriptive patterns, and looking for relationships” (p. 144). In this interpretive sense, “phenomenology...offers us the possibility of plausible insights” (van Manen, 1990, p. 9) through an “attempt to determine the meaning embodied in” lived experience (p. 38). The researcher “looks for the emerging themes after one has gathered the material” (p. 69). Interpreting what data supports what theme remains the focus of hermeneutic phenomenology.

I conducted the suspended literature review (although the review did not locate any hermeneutic phenomenological studies that relate to my research question) after essential themes looked apparent (van Manen, 1990). I employed objective and subjective analysing of data, bracketing, participant review, and peer debriefing. I was able, in the most unbiased manner possible, to focus on interpreting the data at hand. Van Manen rightfully draws attention to this important focus on interpretation:

By setting up situations conducive to collaborative hermeneutic conversations, the researcher can mobilize [the interviewee] to reflect on...experiences (once these have been gathered) in order to determine the deeper meanings or themes of these experiences. For this purpose a series of interviews may be scheduled or arranged ...that allows reflection on the text (transcripts) of previous interviews in order to aim for as much interpretive insight as possible....In the light of the original phenomenological question...both the researcher and the interviewee weigh the
appropriateness of each theme by asking: “Is this what the experience is really like?” (p. 99)

The researcher must be “sensitive to the subtle undertones of language” (van Manen, 1990, p. 111) and be “a true listener” (p. 111). The depth and accuracy of the interpretation, then, “requires a high level of reflectivity, an attunement to lived experience, and a certain patience or time commitment” (p. 114). While analysis crudely suggests what themes might exist, interpretation determines what essential themes indeed exist.

Interestingly, one tool of interpretation is the researcher’s writing of the text. Van Manen (1990) tells us that “writing teaches us what we know, and in what way we know what we know” (p. 127). The researcher’s/author’s goal is insightful writing, but this sort of writing “cannot be accomplished in one straightforward session. Rather, the process of writing and rewriting (including revising or editing) is more reminiscent of the artistic activity of creating an art object that has to be approached again and again” (p. 131). Vandenberg (1992) says,

Van Manen’s ideas about writing are corroborated by the material conditions of my own research. I do not know what I think of an educational problem until I read about it and then write a paper that includes all relevant things conceptualized in a vocabulary drawn from phenomenological discourse. Now I know why my final editing does not obviate the need to type the final draft myself: blue pencilling after the draft has gone cold objectifies it and enables one to see what it says to someone else, but this is merely rereading. Rewriting is
necessary to become fully engaged in the matter, resubjectifying it so it becomes more truly disclosive of what is intended. (Significance of Writing, para. 1)

In short, in terms of interpretive precision, “writing and rewriting is the thing” (van Manen, 1990, p. 132).

The term interpretation, or hermeneutics, however, makes one wonder about validity. Although my use of free imaginative variation, peer debriefing, participant review, field notes, contact summaries, and memos addressed validity issues, a few other considerations remain.

Other considerations. McMillan and Schumacher (1997) discuss validity in terms of “the degree to which the explanations of phenomena match the realities of the world” (p. 404), or, in the case of my study, match the realities of Arthur’s lived experience. To enhance this match, I conducted the conversational interviews in the comfort and familiarity of a place of Arthur’s choosing. He chose his office, his “working place.” This avoided the scientific sense of any sort of “contrived or laboratory settings” (p. 405).

To further enhance this match, I spoke “in the participant[’s] language” (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997, p. 405) and avoided the “use of...abstract social science language” (p. 406). This was a simple matter. The participant is a poet. I am a poet. We both write free verse. Not in the geographical sense, but in the intellectual sense, I am an “indigenous-insider” (Banks, 1998, p. 8), one who “endorses the unique values, perspectives, behaviors, beliefs, and knowledge of his or her indigenous [poetry] community and culture and is perceived by people within the community as a legitimate community member who can speak with authority about it” (p. 8).
Therefore, the use of “low-inference descriptors” (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997, p. 406) was a simple matter. Low-interference terms “are those used and understood by the participant” (p. 406). Those terms stand “in contrast to the abstract language of a researcher” (p. 406). The ethical thing, in terms of respect and good communication, is to “consider your audience” (Theocratic School Guidebook, 1971, p. 112). Understandably, this text contains “verbatim accounts of conversations and precise descriptions of actions by [the] participant” (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997, p. 406).

How did I ensure the validity of those verbatim accounts? Tape recorders notably “enhance validity by providing an accurate and relatively complete record” (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997, p. 406). I added to that validity by taking note of Arthur’s facial and body gestures. C. Chasteauneuf, who has used interviewing in qualitative studies, advised me to “make note of the context....Look at the tape counter on the recorder, note the number, and then make notes about what [is] going on....Then associate gestures, grimaces, etc., with a spot on the tape” (Personal e-mail, March 11, 2002). My notes recorded emphatic gestures. Emphatic gestures “express feeling and conviction” (Theocratic School Guidebook, 1971, p. 133), both of which, like verbatim accounts, are data in themselves because both refer “to the way that a person [participant] experiences and understands his or her world” (van Manen, 1990, p. 183). In the interest of validity, for the purpose of understanding Arthur’s lived experiences as much as possible, I entered description of noteworthy gestures in the transcribed data at appropriate places (e.g., [tape counter: 127; participant nods profusely]).
Another issue related to validity includes bias. A biased study could invalidate its findings. Although we recognize that “science can lead men to the truth” (Scientists, 1994, p. 25), we must also recognize that “scientists are by no means immune to error. This is especially so when political, philosophical, and personal bias clouds the issue” (p. 25). In my effort to reduce bias, then, I kept a field log, “a chronological record” (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997, p. 409) of the interview and episodes of participant review and peer debriefing. I kept a field journal to contain “assessments of the trustworthiness of each datum set” (p. 409). The field journal also detailed “the evolution of [my] ideas, personal reactions, possible related literature, and questions for future investigation” (p. 410).

One more issue related to validity deserves attention. In a qualitative study, “researchers frequently face ethical dilemmas and make decisions to resolve these in order to continue the study” (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997, p. 410). If ethical considerations arose, I recorded them and subsequent researcher-participant agreements. This created “a record of ethical considerations [that] help[ed] to justify the subsequent choices” (p. 410). To further validate the study, I considered audibility criteria: “Audibility is maintaining a record of data management techniques and decision-rules that document the ‘chain of evidence’ or ‘decision-trail’” (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997, p. 410). I “place[d] a list of files...and decision-rules in an appendix for perusal” (p. 411) by colleagues interested in verifying the data.

**Ethics**

Prior to the collection of data, I wrote a letter of introduction and an Informed Consent Form (see Appendix A) that were provided to the respondent. The letter of
information detailed potential benefits and risks to the respondent; sampling criteria; what
the respondent would be asked to do; who would have access to the respondent’s
responses; how anonymity would be addressed; how confidentiality would be addressed;
and how long data would be stored and when and how it would be destroyed. Appendix A
should reveal that the “procedures followed...[were] ethically, medically, and legally
acceptable” (Research, n.d., p. 8).
Conclusions

Many events in school encouraged Arthur to become a creative writer. I describe many of them and the themes that they support, but first I would like to discuss what Arthur did not say.

What Arthur Did Not Say

I wondered whether Arthur would describe creative writing activities as examples of lived school experiences that encouraged him to became a creative writer. Interestingly, he mentioned none. Does that mean teachers offered no creative writing activities? During one participant review session, Arthur said teachers very rarely had asked students to write poems or stories of fiction. In my elementary and high school experience, teachers seldom set up creative writing classes, although I do recall one of note. In grade 12 English, our teacher asked us to do something novel. He asked us to write a poem about absolutely anything that we wished to write about. My poem confused him, but his genuine interest in and validation of my work convinced me I wanted to be a writer from that day forward. Margaret Atwood also relates a grade 12 English creative writing event as significant, although in the context of finally she was beginning to shine as an English student. Her teacher said, “This must be a very good poem, dear, because I can’t understand a word of it” (Polanyi, 2002, p. 62).

Arthur did not refer to the kinds of creative writing activities found on Web sites and did not describe any specific creative writing activities that had encouraged him. He did not refer to assignments similar to the ones in my creative writing course. But, as will be described later, he did mention significant writing assignments. He did not mention school activities about sending editors submissions, nor did he not mention classroom
publication activities that had motivated him to write or that had encouraged him to further study creative writing. He mentioned no encouragement through contact with a teacher who had himself or herself been a creative writer.

But Arthur did mention many, many examples of events in school that had encouraged him to take up creative writing later in life. I will now describe the themes that those events support.

_The Themes_

Events in school that promoted the joy and wonder of silent reading of poetry and fiction encouraged Arthur to become a creative writer. Events that promoted the joy and wonder of listening to poetry and fiction fluently read aloud and of listening to songs encouraged him. Events that promoted the wonder of uninterrupted language experiences and that promoted the intrigue and wonder of flights of imagination fuelled by the connotative and imagistic value of words encouraged him. Events that promoted the excitement of verbally punning and joking and of informing others about what he had read and learned encouraged him, and so did events that promoted the joy and exhilarating freedom of writing down his thoughts and feelings based on poetry and fiction read and having those thoughts and feelings valued by teachers. Events that promoted the exhilarating freedom of choice of reading material and that promoted the satisfaction and excitement of receiving sound direction about how to write well from compassionate teachers encouraged Arthur to become a creative writer. Words in these themes such as "joy," "wonder," "intrigue," "excitement," "exhilarating," and "satisfaction" describe feelings Arthur had. I chose those words through my analysis and
interpretation of the data and through repeated participant review that established their validity (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997; van Manen, 1990).

I will now discuss those themes and events that support each of those themes.

Theme One. Arthur was encouraged by events in school that promoted the joy and wonder of silent reading of poetry and fiction. The words “joy” and “wonder” show he enjoyed “the benefits and pleasures of...reading” (The Ministry, 1996a, 1996b, 1996c, p. 1). The Ministry’s three guides refer to those benefits and pleasures repeatedly. In fact, Arthur remembered “reading more than writing.” He spoke about how he had become “intrigued with literature...Books...were important,...always intriguing...because...people...in literature, in writing,...in poetry, and in adventures” were more intriguing than, he felt, himself.

I asked if reading in one grade stood out from another. He said no. He had loved “literature. Poetry,” especially “poetics....Even though I was reading, say an adventure story [like Tarzan], the poetic imagery that came through was important to me.”

He remembered other specific reading texts. He said, “I took English 91 which I think is [now] called English 12 or Lit 12,” and he recalled reading Beowulf in class. He had loved “silent reading” opportunities of such fine works. He recalled feeling intrigued by great writing such as the work of Ralph Waldo Emerson and the fiction of D. H. Lawrence. The imagery of their texts, of a myriad of good texts, had intrigued him to the point of fascination.

That fascination had transcended the arousal of curiosity found in intrigue. In participant review sessions, Arthur described feelings of joy and wonder rather than just intrigue as the most accurate emotions that had often filled him as he read in school. On
reflection, I relate to his feelings. I too felt joy and wonder during silent reading of many
texts in school. I felt such a wide and powerful range of emotions while reading that I
wanted to know how people can write with such expertise.

Theme Two. Events in school that promoted the joy and wonder of listening to
poetry and fiction fluently read aloud and of listening to songs encouraged Arthur to
become a creative writer. He said, “I remember songs...that we used to sing. I was
intrigued with the words....'Put your left foot in, put your left foot out.' ‘I’m a little
teapot.' Things like that. I can remember the words of stories....I was intrigued...by the
teacher who would read to us. I loved listening to the voice....I fell in love with the
voice....Loved listening.” Although these singsong events helped establish a “resource-
rich learning environment” (The Ministry, 1996a, p. 8; 1996b, p 9; 1996c, p. 10) for
Arthur, The Ministry’s three guides do not specifically encourage language arts teachers
to consider the benefits of singsongs.

“The fun part of language...was,” for Arthur, “always...the intriguing....sound that
words made.” Sometimes he didn’t know the meaning of a “word, but [he] was just
intrigued with the sound, how it would move through [his] ear, how it would sound when
[he] said it, and then putting...words together.” Arthur distinctly recalled an early
intermediate experience of his teacher reading aloud a Pauline Johnson poem, and how
the words had opened up “wonderful feelings” inside of him while he had been “swept
along by the reading.” He had “loved the sound of the word in poetry” and he had “loved
music too, but...hearing the words really, really clearly...was always the intriguing part for
[Arthur].”
He did not recall participating in the singing of songs, most often sung in the primary grades; however, he did recall “listening, and being very cognizant of this.” One of the feelings he had had while the students sang was “isolation, being alone, but being brought into the classroom by the sound of...music and the words.” That had made him “feel happy,...inclusive.”

For Arthur there was a certain musical quality to poetry read aloud. As he said, “What came through to me was the word: the cadence, the music, ah, poetry reading,...listening to the teacher read out loud.” But he had loved to hear fiction read aloud too. He mentioned, “In grade eight the teacher read Treasure Island....I was intrigued by the sound of the words and the way they fit into the picture I was building. Even though the language is really difficult, I didn’t know all of the words,...that didn’t upset me.” Again Arthur referred to “the sound. It was beautiful. It was...like...parrots. Colourful parrots flitting about....That was the feeling I had with the language. Colourful parrots just flitting about. Moving. Moving. Intriguing.” [Arthur moved his hands about as if the parrots are flitting about before him.] The joy and wonder he had felt in school clearly filled him during the interview.

I, too, had an experience in school, in grade seven, in which our teacher read fiction aloud, and that experience, like Arthur’s, encouraged me to become a writer. My grade seven teacher read aloud A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens. I remember saying to myself, “I don’t know who this Dickens guy is, but he sure knows what he’s doing.” I wanted to know how one goes about using the printed word to make others feel emotion. The wonder of that grew inside me through junior high school. I wanted to
know how one writes words that make people feel, that make people feel so deeply that they cannot forget the stories.

Jack Hodgins (1993) also had a somewhat similar experience. In his *A Passion for Narrative: A Guide for Writing Fiction*, he describes a teacher reading to his class as an example of a school experience that encouraged him to become a writer of fiction.

Books were forms of magic, once you could read them. From the moment I’d learned to read, I wanted to be one of those people who put magic between the covers!

In high school, the young English teacher who had introduced us to the poetry of Robert Frost and the essays of Roderick Haig-Brown persuaded the school board to buy five copies of *The Old Man and the Sea* for the school library. Then—perhaps he wasn’t sure we’d make use of them otherwise—he read one of those copies aloud. Something during that reading—which he strung out over several days, as I recall—a longing that had been with me all my life suddenly took on sharper focus: I would devote my life to the writing of serious fiction. (1993, p. 13)

Arthur, like Jack Hodgins and me, was encouraged to take up creative writing, in part, because of being read to in school. The Ministry says “the learning environment should...foster enjoyment of language in all its aspects” (1996a, 1996b, 1996c, p. 2). For Arthur, his being read to fostered such enjoyment. The Ministry’s (1992) *Primary Program: Resource Document* says, “Research implications emphasize...reading to children” (p. 182).
Because of the flowing nature of being read to, generally an uninterrupted flow of words, Theme Two relates to Theme Three.

Theme Three. Arthur was encouraged to become a creative writer through events in school that promoted the wonder of uninterrupted language experiences. These experiences allowed him to truly consider himself in relation to others and the environment, and to consider his own thoughts and feelings without having to step out of his considerations to answer teachers’ questions. For Arthur, these experiences were definitely beneficial and encouraging. The Ministry (1996a, 1996b, 1996c) does refer to many videos—plays and movies—and to much reading material that could serve as excellent resources for uninterrupted language experiences.

Arthur said, “The very first experience I had was a film, and it was in grade one, and I was five years old, and it was a film about a milkman. [Laughs.] And I was intrigued by the images on the screen, but also by the voice. I remember it almost seemed like one of those CBC announcer’s voices....There was a guy named Morry Westgate that used to be the voice for the NHL hockey games. I think he would sell ESSO oil or something. But I loved his voice. And I’m sure it was his voice, or someone like that, a very trained...CBC radio voice. And I could just hear the cadence. you know, rise and fall of the language. Of course I was turned on by the visual because I am visual too, but I was also turned on by what I was hearing. And so, the voice...describing this milkman's ordinary day...wasn't mundane for me. Hearing the words and the language and the cadence and the rhythm....I can remember being intrigued by the sound.” When Arthur used the word intrigued, as he often did, he often implicitly referred to wonder as part of the experience. In fact, in participant review, Arthur chose the word wonder as opposed to
intrigue as the emotional element of Theme Three. Wonder takes the curiosity of intrigue and adds surprise, even astonishment.

When Arthur discussed Theme Two and Theme Three with me in participant review, he agreed with me that both are related through sound-based events. But he believed that Theme Three needs its own category apart from Theme Two. Theme Three does not require any sound-based events, as in the case of uninterrupted reading events.

Arthur created a clear picture of his grade one uninterrupted experience by filling in many other details. “We were all taken down to this kind of basement. It was very damp... I was aware of dampness and... sounds and... people’s movement--and smells.... It was like going down into a dungeon in a way.... And it was a dark place. And those metal chairs... would make that scraping sound on the cement down below.... I was intrigued. I was very intrigued.... I was definitely paying attention and I was into myself. Like I knew there were people around me, and I knew I was part of a crowd. But I was... one with the film and the experience.... I was alone in a way. I was there with other people, but I was kind of alone.... Alone and experiencing things... I had a feeling that other people weren’t around me because I was hearing and seeing and smelling.”

This uninterrupted experience allowed Arthur to be swept along with the sensory information the event presented. In grade ten he watched *Romeo and Juliet* during a class visit to a theatre in Vancouver, Canada, and that uninterrupted event also encouraged him to become a creative writer. He revelled in the sound of the words and the imagery. They swept him along. The wonder of the experience lives with him now. He had the same experience when his teacher read a Pauline Johnson poem, and when his grade eight teacher read aloud *Treasure Island*—the whole novel—over many, many classes. Arthur
had great lengths of time to create pictures in his mind and to revel in and wonder about the imagery.

These uninterrupted language experiences likely relate to flights of imagination fuelled by the connotative and imagistic value of words, but in Arthur’s mind, confirmed through participant review, these flights are elements of Theme Four.

**Theme Four.** Events in school that promoted the intrigue and wonder of flights of imagination fuelled by the connotative and imagistic value of words encouraged Arthur to become a creative writer. Sometimes those events were simply Arthur left alone by his teacher to “daydream,” to play with words in his head that a poem or story brought to his attention. He said, “[I] looked out the window, formed pictures in my head.” Sometimes Arthur had been left alone by the teacher to experience intrigue over the “connotative meanings and the association with the rest of the sentence and the paragraph” that the teacher and class had been considering.

These were imaginative events for Arthur. Sometimes those events were a result of “teachers that were...focussed...on...imagination” who respected Arthur’s need to sit and daydream and imagine and play with the connotative and imagistic value of words in his head from poems and stories considered in class. The Ministry in effect supports such events through comments such as “the learning environment should stimulate students’ imaginations” (1996a, 1996b, 1996c, p. 2). Arthur’s intrigue lay in the ability of those events “to arouse and hold [his] interest or curiosity” (Intrigue, 1992, p. 514), and his wonder lay in the ability of those events to create “a feeling of mingled surprise and curiosity” (Wonder, 1992, p. 1132).
Theme Five. Arthur was encouraged to become a creative writer by events in school that promoted the excitement of verbally punning and joking and of informing others about what he had read and learned. The logic of placing “punning,” “joking,” and “informing others” together in this theme rests in their verbal expression. This logic states Arthur’s view as he expressed himself in participant review. Direction related to this theme from The Ministry comes from the following: Students need “to manipulate language for...expression...[and] students should...have frequent opportunities to talk...about what they have learned...from a variety of stories, poems, essays, documents, and other media” (1996a, 1996b, 1996c, p. 3).

Arthur said, “I remember punning as early as grade...two or three...I was twisting the language to suit myself and making jokes.” By grade six, he “was becoming the class clown.” He explained, “I was quite funny. I would play on what the teacher said, made fun of that. I would make fun of what people said. So I became a little comedian.” Teachers who had allowed him, within reason, to pun and joke, were actually furthering his “intrigue with language.”

Arthur had been sharing a humanistic part of himself that others had showed appreciation for through laughter. His sense of the ludicrous and incongruous, his “humorous use of a word in a way that suggest[ed] two or more interpretations” (Pun, 1994, p. 591), and his celebration of “the foibles and inconsistencies of human nature” (Wit and Humor, 1993, p. 217) had brought him reinforcement that he had thoroughly enjoyed, that he had found exciting. “There was great humour,” he said about a senior English teacher’s class. “[My teacher] encouraged humour in me. She encouraged me to say things. Because I would often say weird things and get the kids laughing.” I asked,
“So her validation of humour: You feel that encouraged you to become a writer?”

“Yes...I think that writing involves a huge sense of humour. Humour is a sense of the world.”

He broke down, emotionally overcome, when he related how in grade ten English he had shared his knowledge in class. “I was putting my hand up,” he related, “and--irrelevant information. I had just tons of it. I was reading dictionaries, encyclopaedias. Ah,...I'm just emotional right now.” He had to stop to compose himself. The experience of informing others had created a wonderful sense of accomplishment in Arthur.

Arthur’s punning, joking, and informing has a definite entertainment value that I relate to. In grade five, I played my guitar for my class. The exhilaration of entertaining those students was almost more than I could stand. For me, events in school that promoted the excitement of entertaining others encouraged me to become a creative writer. This broad statement does not focus on the entertainment value of only words. For Arthur, however, Theme Five draws squarely on the excitement of punning, joking, and informing through the use of words.

Theme Six. Events in school that promoted the joy and exhilarating freedom of writing down his thoughts and feelings based on poetry and fiction read and having those thoughts and feelings valued by teachers encouraged Arthur to become a creative writer. This theme draws support from The Ministry through many statements. For example, “As students come to understand and use language more fully, they are able to enjoy the benefits and pleasures of...writing...Students should...feel that their ideas are valued....An English language arts program should encourage students to...communicate effectively in written...forms” (1996a, 1996b, 1996c, pp. 1-2).
Many events that support Theme Six come from English classes in grades 10 to 13. Arthur spoke about “writing about the poem,...elucidation....Paragraph work....some essays.” I asked, “Would you say that writing about poems encouraged you to become a writer?” “Yes...Because one of the things it did is it helped me to figure out my own processes in writing....It was a learning thing.”

His grade 13 English teacher “was fantastic....We’d write,” he said, “about...our feelings....It was, how did you feel about...? What did this make you think about...?” I added, “And to write about how you felt, to write about your thoughts--” “Encouraged my feelings,” Arthur said, “to write about me and my feelings. So that led to my writing and my poetry. My sense of writing as a writer.”

He recalled how, in general, other students had complained about writing assignments based on their thoughts and feelings. But Arthur’s reaction had been “Yippee!...Here is a chance to express myself, not just verbally.” He laughed. “I got A’s for saying things on paper!...I was getting great encouragement.” He spoke anecdotally about how the English teachers for grades 10 to 13 had said, “You’ve expressed this really well.” “And that encouraged me,” he said, “even further to want to go on to express myself on paper more and more....If I hadn’t had that encouragement, I might have become stultified as a writer....Perhaps only gone so far.”

He contrasted these teachers to others who had appeared to expect only limited quality or limited depth of writing. These teachers had encouraged in Arthur an unlimited quality and depth, an unlimited exploration of “language and feelings.” They had encouraged him “to explore feelings with language. To explore poetry. Especially poetry.” These teachers “were all lovers and proponents of poetry, and great lovers
They encouraged you," I asked, "to express your feelings and your
thoughts about what you read?" "Not just orally," he answered, "but...on paper....That
equation expression on paper as a writer began to take hold. It's...like...little drops from above that
nestle down and...if they're immediately noticed and encouraged,...then great things
come. But if I hadn't been encouraged, those drops would have...just evaporated. And
perhaps I wouldn't be where I am today."

These writing events promoted joy along with a sense of exhilarating freedom for
Arthur to express himself; teachers valued what Arthur had to say, and he recognized that
they valued it. My grade 12 poem-writing experience, described in the "What Arthur Did
Not Say" subsection carries, to at least some degree, joy and a sense of exhilarating
freedom, but I consider that experience more, much more, as one of the events that
promoted the joy of my ideas being appreciated, or valued.

In view, then, of the thorough classroom discussions Arthur had experienced that
preceded his writing down his thoughts and feelings, I have to say Arthur did describe
rich and deep analyses of creative writing in school as examples of experiences that had
encouraged him. I referred to the possibility of such experiences in the "Bracketing in
Possibilities" subsection, and I bring them up within this Theme Six discussion because
the rich and deep analyses of poetry that his teachers had promoted in class had helped
germinate the thoughts and feelings Arthur had included in his writing, writing that his
teachers had valued.

These teachers created "frequent opportunities [for students] to talk and write
about what they [had] learned about themselves and others from a variety of stories [and]
poems" (The Ministry, 1996a, 1996b, 1996c, p. 3), providing their "students greater self-
awareness and a deeper appreciation of the richness and complexity of human experience” (1996, p. 3; 1996b, p. 3; 1996c, p. 4).

In the “Bracketing in Possibilities” I wondered whether Arthur had chopped up stories and language the way many Ministry-prescribed books do and whether that had been just the sort of activity that had encouraged him to take up creative writing. Arthur mentioned discussions of poetics in his senior English classes, which had included interpretations of poetry, but he mentioned nothing about chopping up stories and language up into bits of plot, theme, character, point of view, symbolism, and irony (see, e.g., Ball, 1969; and Perrine, 1966). He also mentioned nothing about class discussions that had chopped up stories and language into bits of subject, verb, and other mechanical elements of language (see, e.g., Hart & Heim, 1982; and Shaw, 1986), but that does not surprise me. He said, “The thing that I wasn't good at was...the parsing of sentences and things like that.” “The grammatical?” I asked. “The grammatical,” he said with certainty.

Theme Seven. Events in school that promoted the exhilarating freedom of choice of reading material encouraged Arthur to become a creative writer. The great variety of reading sources mentioned in The Ministry’s three guides (1996a, 1996b, 1996c) provide ample freedom of choice for today’s students.

Arthur experienced Theme Seven’s exhilarating freedom of choice one day after school when he was allowed to stay in his grade ten English classroom and read whatever he wished from his teacher’s class library. “Four o’clock in the afternoon and I’m sitting there. I’d been sitting there...since the end of the bell for an hour. And on [my teacher’s] shelf there were a whole series of books that I’d never heard of. I picked off the shelf
Boccaccio's *Decameron*. It was written in the plague years, and considered a bit of a naughty book...[My teacher] was a very liberal lady. And that's part of my intrigue here.”

He continued: “The story is that [this] group of people trying to escape the plague went up to a villa in Italy, where...there were no rats that carried the plague....It was a thick book. I'd never heard of it before and it's sitting on the shelf there. I...was intrigued by the title. I've always been intrigued by titles. This was...the *Decameron*. I thought, ‘*Decameron*? What could that be?’ So I picked it up, and turned to the middle, and I was reading a passage that was a bit naughty...Each of these people in this village had to tell a story to keep themselves entertained. So I think there's ten times ten days, a hundred stories or something like that. Each of them three or four pages long. At any rate, I'm getting right into this. A...boy with testosterone.”

The experience had allowed him to revel in and wonder about the sexuality of male-female relationships, and to wonder about his own adolescent sexuality. “I'm reading the stuff. I'm right into it. I'm totally oblivious. I...couldn't even hear a sound. There was nobody else in the world. And all of a sudden I looked up and there was [my teacher].”

I was captivated by his story and his intensity. He said, “Now I'd expected because of my deep conservative religious upbringing to be berated. That's what my dad would have done. Or my mum....But she just smiled and she sat down and she said, ‘What are you reading?’ [Arthur grew too emotional to continue. He needed time to “collect himself.”] “It was...a pivotal point for me. A really important point. My appreciation of not just the word, but the freedom that comes with me and the word....It's me and the word and the word and me...and it's very inclusive.”
I wondered: “Do you mean that you learned something in that experience about language that you didn't know before?” “Oh, phenomenal. Phenomenal. Not so much language, but...the freedom. This is the feeling I have. The freedom to explore words and associations and thoughts and processes. Unbidden. Completely free. Completely free to associate. To think. To read a word, to understand it, to put words together. No constrictors. Nobody saying, ‘That's bad. You can't do that. You can't think that.’ I found that freedom in literature. I didn't find it at home. I didn't find it in the...Church. I didn't find it in school generally because school generally was very logical, linear. But I found that freedom that day. Well, many days, you know. There were experiences before that, but that was a pivotal day for me. And I tell you, I thank [my teacher]...That was just phenomenal....I'm...still emotional today about it. It was just mind-blowing.”

For Arthur, the exhilarating freedom of his choosing Biccaccio’s Decameron to read had translated into a Joycean epiphany—“the sudden awareness...caused by a simple, casual event that takes on a new and intense meaning” (Epiphany, 1993, p. 70). During one participant review session, Arthur described that he believed the strictness of Catholicism, the strictness of home rules, and the logical precision of math and science had formed a backdrop for encouraging him to in a sense break out and enjoy the freedom of language expression, such as the “naughty” anecdotes of Biccaccio’s Decameron. His teacher had not criticized his choice of reading material. That had validated his choice. His epiphany had told him that he could reach into the universe of literature and choose what he pleased.

He recalled going out to buy Lady Chatterly’s Lover simply because he was not allowed to read it according to the Church and his parents. In school, his freedom of
choice of reading material had become an exhilarating choice because his choices had
introduced him to a vast and wonderful world of language expression, some of which had
borne him up to question mainstream standards of morality, ethics, religion, and politics.

Theme Eight. Arthur was encouraged to become a creative writer through events
in school that promoted the satisfaction and excitement of receiving sound direction
about how to write well from compassionate teachers. He referred to English teachers
from grades nine to thirteen who likely would have agreed with The Ministry’s following
comments:

By reflecting on their ideas and using language to express them, students become
more adept at expressive [and] artistic...thought and broaden their foundation of
written...use....Feedback from others...helps students assess their own language
development. This awareness motivates students to...manipulate language
for...expression. (1996a, pp. 2-3; 1996b, pp. 2-3; 1996c, p. 3)

“There were times when I didn’t express things well,” Arthur said, “which of
course was probably more important as a writer. To be told that this wasn’t effectively
said. Or this went nowhere. They [his teachers] weren’t afraid to say those things. But all
of that was still encouragement as a writer. Because they were encouraging me through
their critiques to write better, to write more effectively, to write more cogently, to write
with feelings, to write with the whole mind and heart and soul...In other words, they
weren’t Polly Anna in their encouragement. They weren’t saying oh that's fantastic...in
everything I did. No, no. They...would take something of what I did, critique it, and then
ask for something better. So there was always this directional thing happening.” Arthur
had found these times of direction satisfying and exciting, but they stood out in particular because of the compassion his teachers had showed him.

I too have had compassionate teachers who have given me sound direction. One was Canada’s Professor Harlow, who taught me fiction writing in 1976 at the University of British Columbia, another was England’s D. M. Thomas, who taught me poetry writing in 1996 at the Humber School for Writers, and another was the USA’s Paul Bogdan, who taught me novel writing in 1997 at the Writer’s Digest School of Writing. Arthur’s grade nine to thirteen English teachers encouraged him to become a creative writer. These three teachers encouraged me to continue learning my art and craft.

I wondered in the "Bracketing in Possibilities" subsection whether Arthur would mention excellent direction about how to write as an example of an activity that had encouraged him to continue learning the art and craft of writing, and whether he would describe lived school experiences that relate to the wealth of information I reviewed in chapter two (see, e.g., Bickham, 1996; Block, 1979; Bryant, 1978; Clark, Brohaugh, Woods, Strickland, & Blocksom, 1992; Dessner, 1979; Dickson & Smythe, 1970; Drury, 1991; Fredette, 1988; Hall, 1989; Irwin & Eyerly, 1988; Jones, 1978; Leavitt, 1970; Leavitt & Sohn, 1979; Powell, 1973; Roberts, 1981; Seuling, 1991; Thornley, 1976; Wakan, 1993; and Wyndham, 1972). In view of Theme Eight, excellent direction from teachers clearly had encouraged him, although he mentioned no specific how-to-writing direction.

I also wondered in that subsection whether writing activities in school that motivate students to write creatively encourage some to pursue creative writing. I cannot discuss this in reference to Arthur because although his senior English teachers had
encouraged him to write down his thoughts and feelings about poetry and fiction he read in class, he did not say the writing assignments had been designed to motivate him to write creatively (What is Creative Writing?, 1999).

I also wondered in that subsection whether Arthur would mention activities that addressed intrinsic motivation as examples that encouraged him to take up creative writing. Arthur did not explicitly mention such activities; however, they must have existed. If intrinsic motivation refers to sufficient levels of novelty, autonomy and expertise (Stipek, 1998) for the student, then the writing activities in his senior English classes must have addressed intrinsic motivation. Sound direction about how to write well from compassionate teachers must have provided him with expertise. A great variety of reading material and class discussion, all food for his writing of thoughts and feelings, must have provided novelty. The exhilarating freedom he had felt about writing down his thoughts and feelings implicitly refers to autonomy.
Recommendations

We may not require all our students to become creative writers, but some students, given the right environment, like a marigold seed given the appropriate combinations of soil, nutrients, water, and sunshine, might germinate into a poet or fiction writer, into an Irving Layton or a Morley Callahan, or into an Earl Birney or a W. O. Mitchell. Some students might germinate into great dramatists. On the other hand, some students might germinate into poets, fiction writers, or dramatists of humble ability. That is fine too. If we, as educators, want to think about what that right environment might be, the themes from this study create a starting place.

That starting place does not offer “generalizability” (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997, p. 18). The themes in this study do not stand as tools “to predict” (p. 18). The sample size of n = 1 creates that assurance (Patton, 1987). In terms of “population external validity” (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997, p. 190), this study cannot “be generalized...to other people who have the same, or at least similar, characteristics” (p. 190) as Arthur because his “psychological, sociological, educational, physical, economic” (Zunker, 1998, p. 7) and spiritual sides make him unique; however, the trustworthiness (Guba & Lincoln, 1982) or validity (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997) of this study ranks high due to many thorough participant review sessions, peer debriefing, and my bracketing in possibilities and bracketing out bias. Therefore, the themes of this study define a valid starting place.

Educators could reason, in view of “the accuracy” (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997, p. 584) of Arthur’s eight themes, that certain events in school might encourage some students to become creative writers.
Theme One—Silent Reading of Poetry and Fiction

Teachers who offer their students a variety of silent reading experiences through reading programs, through literature programs, through access to class libraries, through visits to school libraries, through visits to municipal or otherwise public libraries, through visits to book fairs, and through creative book displays may be encouraging some students to become creative writers. Silent reading opportunities encouraged Arthur. They encouraged me. The Ministry lists a vast number of resources for silent reading in each of its three guides (1996a, pp. B-9 to B-126; 1996b, pp. B-9 to B-122; 1996c, B-9 to B-103).

Theme Two—Listening to Poetry and Fiction Read Aloud and Listening to Songs

The Ministry’s (1996a, 1996b, 1996c) three guides do not encourage language arts teachers to consider the benefits of singsongs and do not address the benefits of teachers reading to students. But the International Reading Association tells teachers to “provide opportunities for students…to be read to each school day” (Supporting Young Adolescents’ Literacy Learning, 2002; also see, e.g., Goodman, Goodman, & Flores, 1979; and Koltin, n.d.). Teachers who provide, especially in the primary grades, class singsongs, and teachers who provide quality oral reading of poetry and fiction, may be encouraging some students to become creative writers. These provisions encouraged Arthur. Jack Hodgins (1993) relates that one teacher reading fine fiction aloud encouraged him to take up fiction writing. I had many similar experiences.

Theme Three—Uninterrupted Language Experiences

Teachers who allow students blocks of time, without interrupting their sensory perceptions or their flights of fancy with questions or other assignments, to enjoy language experiences such as videos, free reading time, read-aloud poetry and fiction,
professionally-performed plays may be encouraging some students to become creative writers. The Ministry (1996a, 1996b, 1996c) refers to videos of movies and plays, to novels, to short story and poetry collections, to scripts, and to electronic media that could serve as content for uninterrupted language experiences.

Theme Four--Flights of Imagination

Teachers who allow students reasonable opportunities to daydream; who openly value flights of imagination, or “lateral-thinking ecstasy” (Lukiv, 2001b, p. 17); who display passionate interest in the connotative and imagistic “life” of words; and who provide texts rich in connotative and imagistic words or phrases may be encouraging some students to become creative writers. Many of The Ministry’s (1996a, 1996b, 1996c) resources just referred to in "Theme Three--Uninterrupted Language Experiences" could serve as connotative and imagistic fuel for students’ imaginations.

Theme Five--Verbally Punning and Joking and Informing Others

Teachers who allow, within the limits of reason, students in class to pun and joke and verbally inform others about what they have learned may be encouraging some of them to become creative writers. These teachers provide a classroom stage on which students “manipulate language for...expression” (The Ministry, 1996a, 1996b, 1996c, p. 3), which refers precisely to what writers do with language.

Theme Six--The Freedom of Writing Down Thoughts and Having Those Thoughts Valued

Teachers who passionately discuss with their students thoughts and feelings based on poetry and fiction texts read in class, and who openly value students’ attempts to write down those thoughts and feelings may be encouraging some of them to become creative
writers. The Ministry (1996a, 1996b, 1996c) speaks frequently about the benefits and pleasures of writing and the need for teachers to value their students’ efforts.

**Theme Seven—The Freedom of Choice of Reading Material**

Teachers who encourage students to explore literature through freedom of choice and through easy access to literature may be encouraging some of them to become creative writers. I refer to many avenues in the subsection “Theme One—Silent Reading of Poetry and Fiction” that teachers could use to provide literary freedom of choice, and The Ministry (1996a, 1996b, 1996c) lists a great library of literary resources that could also provide that freedom.

**Theme Eight—Sound Direction From Compassionate Teachers**

Teachers, notably compassionate, who provide students sound direction about how to write well may be encouraging some of them to become creative writers. The feedback these teachers provide helps students do the very work of writing: “manipulat[ing] language for...expression” (The Ministry, 1996a, 1996b, 1996c, p. 3).

**Further Research**

This study launches a new area of study. I say new because my suspended literature review located no other hermeneutic phenomenological investigations into what experiences in school have encouraged other people to become writers. Comments here and there such as I have found (Hodgins, 1993; Polanyi, 2002) that mention events in school that encouraged or apparently encouraged some to become creative writers do exist, but no concentrated discussion based on in depth interviewing exists to my knowledge. I encourage researchers interested in my research question to consider a hermeneutic phenomenological approach.
Arthur, now that he has lived through this kind of study, wishes he had done the same kind in his graduate studies. He has found the experience illuminating. The wealth and truth of the eight themes astound him. They fill him with wonder, and the recommendations validate his experiences, make them seem worth studying.

I have found the experience illuminating. It fills me with wonder. I have taught senior high school creative writing courses for six years, generally basing my teaching on my own experiences. But now I have Arthur’s experiences too. I feel better equipped to teach creative writing in the future. I consider Arthur’s eight themes alongside my own experiences in school that encouraged me to take up creative writing as a pastime and as a profession, and that prompts me to think about what might work for students, what might encourage some to take up creative writing. I have no rules here, simply direction.

Other researchers who add conclusions and recommendations through hermeneutic phenomenological study of my research question to the body of this study’s conclusions and recommendations will add depth and breadth to that direction. Researchers could alter the research question to consider university as opposed to elementary school and high school experiences, or to consider fiction writers as opposed to poets. Eventually, a body of knowledge, possibly even a “preponderance of evidence” (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997, p. 391), based on experiences from the continuum of education that poets, fiction writers, and dramatists have had could crystallize into direction in language arts and creative writing programs that better “germinates” future poets, fiction writers, and dramatists.
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http://www.geocities.com/CollegePark/Campus/2159/art10.htm

http://www.geocities.com/CollegePark/Campus/2159/art11.htm

http://www.track0.com/canteach/index.html


CA: Sage.


York: Charles Scribner's Sons.


of British Columbia.


http://www.sil.org/lingualinks/literacy/otherresources/glossaryofliteracyterms/WhatIsCreativeWriting.htm


Appendix A: Ethics Information

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION FOR THE POTENTIAL PARTICIPANT

Dan Lukiv
6-602 Elm Street
Quesnel, BC V2J 3X1
Canada
Telephone: 250-747-2610
E-mail: lukivdan@shaw.ca
March 15, 2002

Dear (______________):

Thank you for your time.

The purpose of this study, which will complete my Master of Education program, is to explore what, if any, school experiences in school encouraged you to become a creative writer. The goal of this study is to discover themes in your experiences and to publish my conclusions and recommendations, possibly in education journals and/or magazines, for the benefit of teachers who wonder what sorts of activities in school have been known to encourage at least one person to become a creative writer.

I would like to interview you because I know that your poetry has been published in some of Canada's finest literary journals and that you write a poetry column in a well-established publication. I respect you as a poet, and I know that others do too. You are definitely a member of Canada's community of poets.

I would like to interview you, asking what, if any, experiences in school encouraged you to become a creative writer. I will tape record the interview. An interview will be a set of data. One interview may be sufficient. After an interview, I will transcribe the data, which I will analyse, looking for possible themes. Other data could include relevant artefacts—poetry, stories, journal entries, or art by you. Your input will help me further analyse data. Our interpretation of data and themes will determine which themes are incidental and which ones are essential.

In accordance with established research ethics, you may withdraw from the study at any time. Your involvement remains voluntary.

Potential benefits from the study are many fold. It should deepen your understanding of what school-related forces or circumstances encouraged you to take up creative writing; it should likewise deepen my understanding of myself; and it should delineate themes that
surprise, enlighten, or inspire readers of the study. Those themes, to be discussed in the conclusions section, should give rise to recommendations for teachers of creative writing.

I will take care to protect your anonymity. In the study, I will keep references to you general. For example: “The participant lives in a small Canadian city, has enjoyed success as a published poet, and has received a formal university education at the graduate level.”

I will keep all data transcriptions, analysis, field notes, contact summaries, and interpretations on disks. These disks, any relevant artefacts, interview tapes, and related textual matter will be kept locked in a filing cabinet at my home.

When my Supervisory Committee considers my study complete, I will return to you any artefacts I have, and I will erase all disks and tapes. Also at that time I will provide you with a copy of the completed study.

I will keep an audibility file locked in that filing cabinet for a period of five years. It will contain a transcription of relevant data, a record of data management, and a record of analysis- and interpretation-related decisions. Then I will destroy—shred—the audibility file.

You are welcome to contact me through snail mail, e-mail, or telephone about any questions that arise. If any ethical dilemma arises during the study, I will gladly work with you to find an ethically prudent resolve. If you, however, have any complaints about the study, please contact the Vice President of Research at the University of Northern British Columbia: 250-960-5820.

Please fill out the attached herewith Informed Consent Form after you have had the opportunity to ask me questions about the study. You and I can sign the form in the presence of each other. Also attached herewith: the study’s Information Sheet.

Thank you for your interest in this research, and for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Dan Lukiv
Informed Consent Form

Please circle the correct response:

Do you understand that you have been asked to be in a research study? Yes  No

Have you read and received a copy of the attached herewith Information Sheet and letter of introduction? Yes  No

Do you understand that the research interviews will be tape recorded? Yes  No

Do you understand the benefits and risks involved in your participating in this study? Yes  No

Have you had an opportunity to ask questions of and discuss this study with Dan Lukiv, the researcher? Yes  No

Do you understand that you are free to refuse to participate in or to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason? Yes  No

Has the issue of confidentiality been explained to you? Yes  No

Do you understand that you will have access to the information you provide? Yes  No

This study was explained to me by: _______________________

I agree to take part in this study.

_________________________________________  __________
Signature of Research Participant            Date

_________________________________________
Printed Name

_________________________________________  __________
Signature of Researcher                     Date
Appendix B: An Interview Guide

I will begin the first session by establishing neutrality and rapport (Patton, 1987). I could ask questions such as, (a) “How long have you been a writer?”, (b) “Do you have a favourite piece that you have written?”, (c) if the answer is yes: “What do you like about that piece?”, (d) “What do you like to write about?”, and (e) “Do you have any advice for up-and-coming writers who are just starting their apprenticeships?”

My research question forms the foundation of the study (van Manen, 1990): “What, if any, lived school experiences encouraged you to become a creative writer?” I could present the question in a variety of ways. For example, (a) “Could you give me an example of an experience in school that encouraged you to become a creative writer?”, (b) “Could you give me another example of a school experience that encouraged you?”; and (c) “You have mentioned several experiences related to your being in that teacher’s class: Do you recall any other experiences from that class?”

I may need to use probes to draw out the experience in concrete terms. Patton (1987) provides examples: (a) “When did that happen?”, (b) “Who else was involved?”, (c) “Where were you during that time?”, (d) “What was your involvement in that situation?”, (e) “How did that come about?”, and (f) “Where did that happen?” (p. 125). Sensory questions could, if necessary, probe into what the participant saw, heard, tasted, smelled, and touched (Patton, 1987). Examples of sensory probes could be: (a) “As you reflect on that experience, do you “see” anything in particular?”, (b) “Do you “hear” anything?”, (c) “Do you “taste” anything?”, (e) “Do you “smell” anything?”, and (f) “Do you physically “feel” anything?”
Feeling questions, in the Carl Rogerian tradition (Egan, 1998), will, if necessary, probe “to understand the respondent’s emotional reactions” (Patton, 1987, p. 118). I may need to ask Rogerian-style questions such as, (a) “How did you feel during that experience?”, (b) “Do you mean that you felt (_____ ) about that experience?”, and (c) “It appears to me that you felt (______): Is that true, or did you feel another emotion?”