

Learning and Teaching Showcase #8

Teaching innovation that leads to student engagement, retention and success.

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Presentation 4

Liminal interventions in the creative writing classroom

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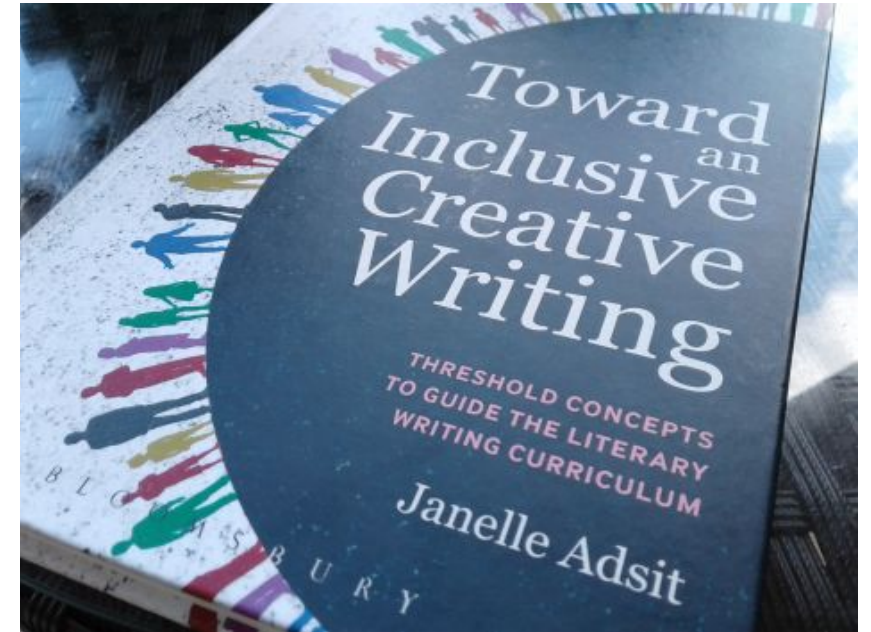
Liminality is not only transition but potentiality, not only 'going to be' but also 'what may be'.

– Victor Turner



Threshold Concepts

In *Toward an inclusive creative writing: threshold concepts to guide the literary curriculum* (2017), Janelle Adsit proposes twelve threshold concepts designed to facilitate students' 'metadiscursive critical thinking and self-reflexivity' in the literary writing curriculum.



Adsit explains that the term 'threshold concept challenges disciplinary instruction to name the forms of meta-knowledge that a curriculum provides' (Adsit: 304).



Meyer and Land

‘A threshold concept can be considered as akin to a portal, opening up a new and previously inaccessible way of thinking about something. It represents a transformed way of understanding, or interpreting, or viewing something without which the learner cannot progress. As a consequence of comprehending a threshold concept there may thus be a transformed internal view of subject matter, subject landscape, or even world view.’

(Meyer and Land 2003: 1)





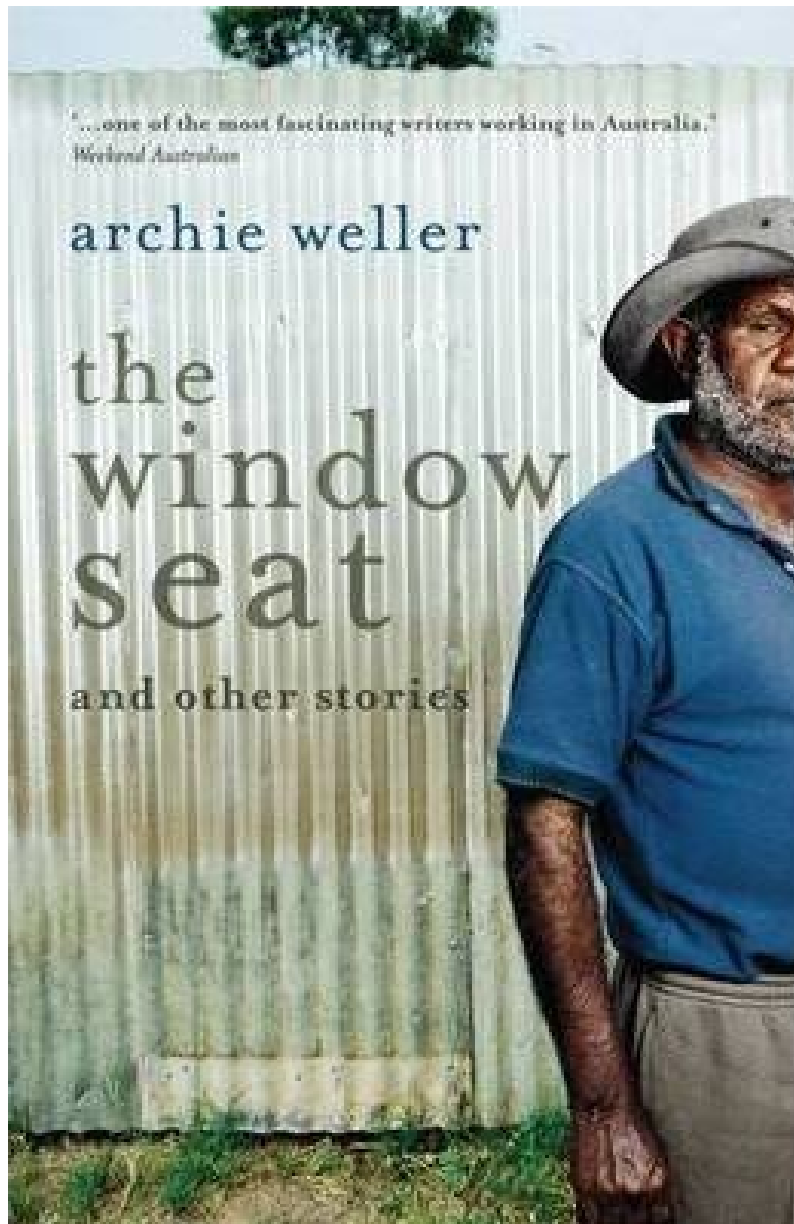
Transformative Troublesome Thresholds

- Attention
- Creativity
- Authorship
- Language
- Genre
- Craft
- Community
- Evaluation
- Representation
- Resistance
- Theory
- Revision



Image source: yourstory.com






Weller, A 2009 '**Walking with Mermaids**', *the window seat*, 204-215, St Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press



The storytellers in your life...

- Is there someone who always takes the stage in your family or group of friends to regale you with a tale of something that's happened to them, or to tell you the latest gossip or news? Is this person you?
 - Did you have a family member or a favourite teacher who read stories to you when you were younger?
 - Do you read stories to children?
 - *Tell us about the storytellers in your life.*
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'How to Become a Writer' by Lorrie Moore

First, try to be something, anything, else. A movie star/astronaut. A movie star/ missionary. A movie star/kindergarten teacher. President of the World. Fail miserably. It is best if you fail at an early age - say, 14. Early, critical disillusionment is necessary so that at 15 you can write long haiku sequences about thwarted desire. It is a pond, a cherry blossom, a wind brushing against sparrow wing leaving for mountain. Count the syllables. Show it to your mom. She is tough and practical. She has a son in Vietnam and a husband who may be having an affair. She believes in wearing brown because it hides spots. She'll look briefly at your writing then back up at you with a face blank as a doughnut. She'll say: "How about emptying the dishwasher?"





Think about the playfulness of Moore's instruction-manual format. Now have a go at listing your own set of instructions for being a writer. Pretend someone has asked you how one might become a writer, and you are going to offer them five simple instructions. Make them as silly, playful or even as serious as you like. Just make a list from one to five.

You could start with:


1. Find a desk, a notepad and pen...



Positive Outcome

These reflective journal tasks and online and classroom discussions provide opportunities for students to reflect on what they already bring to creative writing through their backgrounds, their interests and reading habits, and assists them with acknowledging their storytelling natures (in addition to offering me insight into my students' backgrounds and skillsets etc.). The Moore task also enables them to open up a space, through their imaginings, to picture themselves as writers.

Removing the focus on creativity and employing sneaky tactics has had a positive result, as when discussions around creative practice and process emerge through the course of the semester, students approach them from the position of being creative writers.





Dear ...

Welcome to the online cohort for LITCR1001: Introduction to Creative Writing. I'm your course coordinator for this topic, and also your tutor. I'm an author and a visual artist, and you can learn a little more about me [here](#). I love teaching creative writing and sharing my students' writing journeys with them. I'm looking forward to what we have in store this semester.

I'm guessing that you've had a chance to look at the Moodle site for LITCR1001, as I see that you have contributed to the weekly discussion forum, which is an excellent start to the semester. I'll pop a reply up there to your post shortly. Have you been able to navigate the content okay? I've tried to make all the modules and information very clear. This course is designed to be very straightforward and fun. I can see here that you are in your first year of your Arts degree. How exciting, and perhaps a little daunting, it must be for you.

Are doing a mix of on campus and online courses? Is this your first online topic?

Have you had a chance to look at the topic book and both readings [Week 1: Storytelling & Creativity](#) ?

You'll see when you have a look at it, that you have a **Creative Journal Activity** that consists of three components and that you will be submitting a polished version of this week's and next week's Creative Journal Activities as your **first assessment next Friday**.

Be sure to check out the fun videos and other links I've put up each week, too. It's estimated that you will allocate approx. 10 hours a week to this course. Please feel free to email or ring me if you have any questions about the topic, or assignments, or anything. I'm here to help.

I've set a block of **consultation time every Friday afternoon between 2pm - 4pm** for phone, forum, and video chats. I'll set up a chat forum just for you and your peers in the online group this Friday and we will go from there. I'll send an email out to you all on Friday to remind you that I'm available.

I look forward to keeping in touch with you, and the fun semester we have ahead of us.


Kindest wishes

Threasa






eVALUate - Online

- She provides extra material and activities for students to look through further taking us into the world of writing. Very supportive and provides encouraging feedback.
 - Threasa gave amazing feedback, which helped us so much to try and improve our writing. As well, she checked up on us online students a few times, and it helped so much to be reminded that we had support. I loved the workbooks and lectures too, and the assignments were so much fun! :)
 - The course coordinator is inspiring to students and is very helpful and always responds to student enquires...she is engaging and is caring towards the students.
 - Her main strength is enthusiasm for the subject. So much so that she encourages people who are reluctant to write and explore their stories without sounding wanky, which is a rare trait. She even emailed me to ask why I hadn't logged into Moodle, the first indication I had that there was such a thing and I was supposed to log into it. Where would I be now but for that email? Not writing this, that's for sure!
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eVALUate - Face-to-Face

- Really excited and wants to see us succeed. Believes we can all do it
 - Enthusiasm is high. Teaches very holistically
 - Threasa is a very engaging teacher and her enthusiasm for the topic makes her class a pleasure to be in. She is very supportive and answers any questions or queries quickly and well. I started out the semester thinking I wouldn't enjoy this course because it isn't what I would normally have chosen but by mid semester break it was my favourite class and I think that is because of the obvious hard work that Threasa puts in.
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Challenges

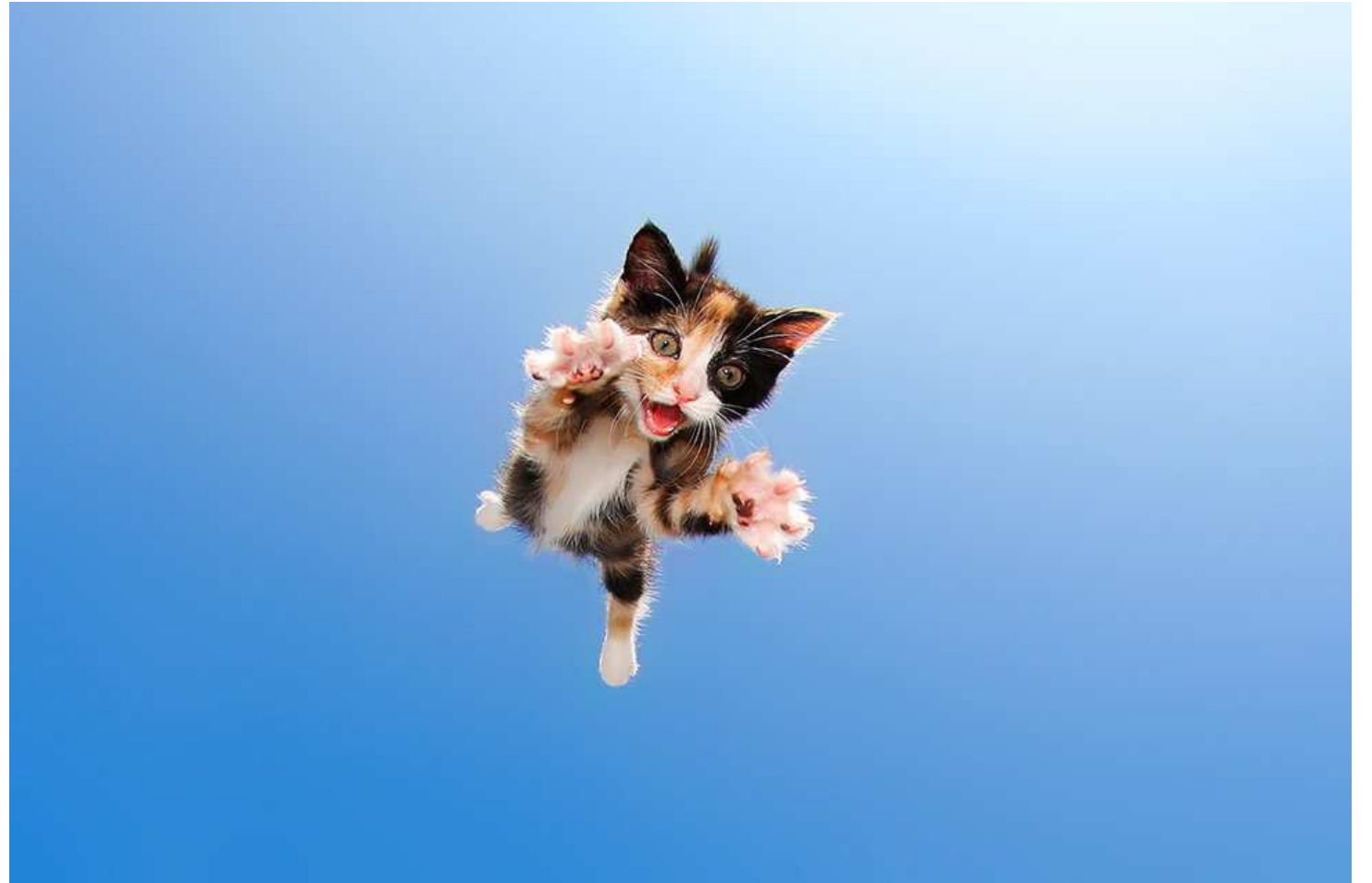


Image source: Seth Casteel via photogrist.com






What may be...

I, too, 'want to claim universities as positive sites of unreason, as liminal spaces for dreaming new possibilities and sharing them with others'

(Young cited in Quinn 2005: 14).

I want to create the space for my students to transition into ever-bigger dreams, as they gain a broader view of their potential through learning.



Further Reading

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Questions and Discussion

