

Introducing English Studies
Chapter 6: Screencast Transcript

Slide 1 [Title slide]

Hello. I am Tonya Krouse, co-author of the textbook *Introducing English Studies*, and in this screencast, I will talk about how to get the most out of literature courses as a creative writing student. Sometimes, students who are passionate about creative writing feel a disconnect between their ambitions as writers and required coursework in the study of literature. This screencast aims to bridge the two fields so that students can have the best experience.

Slide 2 [Text]

Topics in this presentation include:

1. The benefits of literature courses for creative writers
2. The differences between studying literature and studying creative writing
3. Approaching literature for the purposes of criticism vs. appreciating the craft of creative writing
4. Criticism, research skills, and the creative process

Slide 3 [Text]

Literature courses have many benefits for those who wish to write creatively themselves. These benefits include:

- Learning from the masters
- Engaging with the canon and the historical archive of creative approaches across genres
- Discovering how readers approach creative works
- Finding out how to do scholarly research to answer original questions

While creative writers might apply what they learn differently than those who aim to become literary critics, the foundational skills that literature courses teach in close reading, analysis, argumentation are important to both.

Slide 4 [Text]

However, there are some important differences between studying literature and studying creative writing. First, the study of literature focuses on critical thinking about written works that is rooted in practices of close reading, while the study of creative writing tends to orient itself around the appreciation of the techniques that are used in a given work as models for a writer's own craft. Second, the "conversation" that matters most to studying literature is not the conversation in the classroom but rather the conversation of scholars or experts who publish articles about literary works; in contrast, the "conversation" that matters most in creative writing is the conversation in the classroom, where students will critique things that they read and

workshop their own writing. Finally, the study of literature emphasizes reading as a kind of intellectual work that has set methodologies and procedures to govern it; the study of creative writing frames reading as an activity that inspires or informs one's own creative practice.

Slide 5 [Text]

Thus, when we approach literature from a critical perspective our aims are different than when we approach literature from a creative perspective.

- Literary critics read to interrogate, intervene, interpret, establish value, and contextualize.
- Creative writers read to find inspiration, to discover techniques, and to assist others in polishing their own creations.

Slide 6 [Text]

Nevertheless, creative writers have much to gain from the disciplinary instruction they experience in literature courses. Skills in criticism and research can enhance a writer's approach to the creative process. Most notably, the study of literature can help creative writing students to:

- think critically about the audience for their own creative works
- learn practical skills for research, which can help with creating vivid settings and believable characterizations.
- understand the creative process as conscious, deliberate, and situated in the interaction between readers and writers.