Generative AI in Creative Writing Pedagogy: Opportunities, Authorship Dilemmas, and Ethical Boundaries in Higher Education

Ankur Chaudhary
Department of Information Technology, Noida Institute of Engineering and Technology
Greater Noida, U.P., India
Email: ankurchaudhary849@gmail.com

Abstract

Large language models capable of fluent narrative, poetry, and dialogue have entered the creative writing classroom faster than institutions have been able to reason about them. Responses so far cluster at two unsatisfying poles: prohibition, which is unenforceable and pedagogically evasive, and uncritical adoption, which risks hollowing out the very capacities creative writing programmes exist to develop. This paper charts a middle path. We first distinguish the pedagogical functions of creative writing instruction — craft acquisition, voice development, critical reading, revision discipline, and creative confidence — and analyse how generative AI interacts with each, showing that its effects are function-specific rather than uniformly beneficial or harmful. We then map legitimate instructional use cases (ideation partner, style laboratory, revision interlocutor, pastiche and parody object, workshop simulator) against their characteristic risks, including voice displacement, authorship ambiguity, homogenisation of style, and assessment distortion, and propose safeguards for each in a structured framework. Finally, we articulate boundary conditions — uses that should remain out of bounds in credit-bearing creative work — and a disclosure-based assessment architecture that makes process, not artefact, the primary object of evaluation. The paper offers writing programmes a principled basis for policy that is enforceable, teachable, and honest about both the promise and the cost of writing with machines.

Keywords: Generative AI; Creative writing pedagogy; Authorship; Academic integrity; Higher education; Large language models; Assessment design; AI ethics

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1. Introduction

Creative writing occupies an unusual position among academic disciplines confronting generative AI. In most fields, the anxiety is that students will outsource the demonstration of knowledge; in creative writing, the anxiety is deeper — that students will outsource the formation of self that the discipline claims as its distinctive outcome. A history essay written by a model misrepresents what a student knows; a poem written by a model misrepresents who a student is becoming as a writer. At the same time, professional literary practice has never been solitary or unassisted: writers imitate, borrow structures, work with editors, and have always used tools that shape their prose. The arrival of systems that can generate competent creative text therefore forces creative writing pedagogy to articulate, with a precision it has rarely needed, what exactly it is teaching and why.

Institutional responses have been polar. Prohibitionist policies treat any model use as misconduct, but detection is unreliable, false accusations carry serious costs, and blanket bans forfeit genuine pedagogical opportunities while teaching students nothing about tools they will encounter professionally. Enthusiast adoption integrates models everywhere, but risks what we term voice displacement: students who draft with a model from the beginning may

never experience the productive struggle in which idiom, rhythm, and sensibility are formed. This paper develops a function-based analysis that supports differentiated policy: the question is not whether generative AI belongs in creative writing education, but in which pedagogical functions, under what safeguards, and with what boundaries.

2. Background

2.1 What Creative Writing Instruction Teaches

Creative writing pedagogy pursues at least five distinguishable outcomes. Craft acquisition covers learnable technique: scene construction, point of view, line-level economy, prosody. Voice development is the slower formation of a recognisable sensibility — the outcome most bound to the writer's own accumulated choices. Critical reading trains students to read as writers, diagnosing how texts achieve their effects. Revision discipline builds the capacity to re-see and restructure one's own work. Creative confidence — the willingness to begin, to fail, and to continue — underwrites all the others. These functions respond differently to machine assistance, which is why undifferentiated policies misfire.

2.2 Generative Models as Writing Machines

Large language models generate text by modelling statistical regularities across vast corpora. Three properties matter pedagogically. First, fluency without stakes: models produce competent surface prose detached from lived intention, making them excellent objects of craft analysis and dangerous substitutes for expression. Second, regression toward the trained mean: model outputs gravitate toward prevailing styles, creating a homogenisation pressure when many students draw from the same systems. Third, inexhaustible responsiveness: a model will generate endless variants on demand, which can either enrich revision (many roads visible) or corrode it (no version ever has to be fought for). None of these properties is inherently good or bad; each becomes so relative to a pedagogical function.

2.3 Authorship and Integrity Frameworks

Existing academic integrity frameworks assume a binary between the student's work and someone else's. Generative co-writing breaks the binary: output may be prompted, selected, curated, and revised by the student while composed, at the token level, by a model. Copyright regimes in most jurisdictions currently decline protection for purely machine-generated text, and literary institutions are converging on disclosure norms for AI involvement. Higher education needs an analogous move: from policing a boundary that can no longer be observed to requiring an account of process that can be taught, disclosed, and assessed.

3. A Function-Based Framework for Classroom Use

Table 1 presents the core contribution: five instructional use cases mapped to the pedagogical functions they serve, the characteristic risks they carry, and safeguards that make them viable. The framework is deliberately asymmetric — safeguards scale with the proximity of the use case to voice development, the function most vulnerable to displacement.

Table 1. Instructional use cases for generative AI in creative writing, with risks and safeguards

Use Case	Pedagogical Function Served	Characteristic Risks	Safeguards
Ideation partner (premises, what-ifs, constraint prompts)	Creative confidence; craft acquisition	Dependency at the blank page; convergence on model-typical premises	Time-boxed use; require selection rationale; alternate AI-free ideation sessions
Style laboratory (generate pastiche of authors/registers for analysis)	Critical reading; craft acquisition	Mistaking imitation for mastery; flattening of authorial difference	Outputs analysed, never submitted; comparison with source texts; instructor-curated examples
Revision interlocutor (critique, alternatives for student-drafted text)	Revision discipline	Outsourced judgment; acceptance of fluent but voice-erasing rewrites	Student draft precedes any model contact; track-changes provenance; justify accept/reject decisions
Parody and constraint exercises (write against or with the machine)	Craft acquisition; critical reading	Novelty exercises crowding out core practice	Positioned as bounded assignments, not default workflow
Workshop simulator (rehearse giving/receiving critique)	Critical reading; creative confidence	Calibration to model taste rather than human readers	Follow-on human workshop mandatory; contrast model and peer feedback explicitly

3.1 Reading the Framework

Two patterns run through Table 1. First, the safest uses treat model output as an object of study rather than a component of the student's artefact: pastiche analysis and workshop simulation import the machine as specimen, not co-author. Second, wherever model text can enter the student's own work — ideation and revision — the safeguards enforce sequence and provenance: the student's unassisted contribution must exist first and remain identifiable afterwards. Sequence protects voice development; provenance makes disclosure honest and assessment fair.

4. Authorship Dilemmas

Three dilemmas resist tidy resolution and should be taught as dilemmas. The attribution problem: when a student prompts, selects among, and edits model outputs, the resulting text has a distributed genesis that our authorship vocabulary — with its single romantic author — cannot describe; requiring students to write process statements converts this ambiguity into reflective material. The originality problem: models remix their training corpus, so student work incorporating model text inherits an unauditable relationship to prior literature; this is a difference of degree from ordinary influence, but a real difference, and students should understand why literary journals and prize committees increasingly demand disclosure. The formation problem is the deepest: even fully disclosed, well-scaffolded model use changes what students practise, and practice is formation. A programme can coherently decide that certain courses — especially early workshops — are protected spaces for unassisted composition, not because assistance is dishonest but because the struggle itself is the

curriculum. Articulating that rationale to students is more defensible, and more persuasive, than appeals to integrity alone.

5. Ethical Boundaries and Assessment Architecture

5.1 Boundary Conditions

The function-based analysis yields three boundaries. First, undisclosed model-generated text submitted as the student's creative work is misconduct under any defensible policy; disclosure is the non-negotiable floor. Second, courses whose stated outcome is voice development may legitimately designate AI-free assignments, provided the rationale is taught and assessment does not depend on unreliable detection — process evidence (drafts, notebooks, in-class writing) replaces forensic accusation. Third, instructors should not require students to submit their creative work to third-party model providers whose data practices they cannot verify; opt-in alternatives must exist. These boundaries protect, respectively, honesty, formation, and student rights.

5.2 Assessing Process over Artefact

If artefacts can be machine-made, assessment must migrate toward process. A workable architecture has three components: a versioned portfolio (dated drafts showing the work's evolution), a disclosure log (what tools were used, where, and why), and a reflective craft essay in which the student analyses their own decisions — including decisions to accept or reject machine suggestions — in the vocabulary of the course. This architecture is detection-free: it does not ask whether text is machine-generated, a question that cannot be reliably answered, but whether the student can give a credible, craft-literate account of how the work came to be. That capacity is itself a learning outcome, and arguably the one that will matter most in students' professional futures.

6. Discussion

Objections come from both poles. Prohibitionists argue that any accommodation normalises outsourcing; but a policy students experience as both unenforceable and unreasoned teaches cynicism, whereas differentiated rules with articulated rationales teach judgment. Enthusiasts argue that resisting model-assisted drafting is nostalgia, since professional writing will be hybrid; but professional preparation is precisely why unassisted capacity matters — a writer who can only co-write has no voice to bring to the collaboration. The framework also carries implications beyond the classroom: writing programmes are where the next generation's norms of literary authorship will be formed, and the disclosure-and-process culture proposed here is a rehearsal for the publishing ecosystem those students will build. Limitations should be acknowledged: the framework is conceptual and requires classroom-based evaluation across institutional contexts; model capabilities continue to shift, and safeguards calibrated to today's systems will need revision; and cultural contexts differ in their constructions of authorship, imitation, and apprenticeship, which will inflect how the boundaries are drawn locally.

7. Conclusion

Generative AI does not confront creative writing pedagogy with a single question but with five — one for each thing the discipline teaches. This paper has argued that craft acquisition and critical reading can be genuinely enriched by well-scaffolded model use; that revision discipline can be either strengthened or corroded depending on sequence and provenance; and that voice development warrants protected, unassisted space justified openly to students. We proposed a use-case framework with function-matched safeguards, named the authorship dilemmas that should be taught rather than hidden, and outlined a process-centred assessment architecture that abandons unreliable detection in favour of accountable disclosure. The machine can imitate a voice; it cannot form one. Keeping that distinction at the centre of policy is the surest way for creative writing education to adopt what is valuable in generative AI without surrendering what is irreplaceable in itself.

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