



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE CREATIVE?

When I was in high school there was a really cool and creative artist called Cyndi Lauper.

She had lots of songs but probably her most famous song is Girls Just Wanna have fun. When I was doing some research for this article, I realised that Cyndi Lauper was not the person who wrote the original version of the song. The person who wrote Girls Just Wanna have fun was a guy called Robert Hazard.

So does that mean that Cyndi Lauper is not creative or even worse, a cheat?

If you look at her Album, you will see that she credits Robert Hazard with writing the songs and indicates that she has received permission to use the song from the person who wrote it. So not a cheat. I would also argue that we can still call her creative. Her creativity lay in taking something old and turning it into something new and different. It wasn't so much the words where she was creative, they were Robert Hazard's. It was the way that she sang them.

The same can be true in other forms. Hans Christian Anderson's story the Snow Queen became was transformed into a movie-Frozen. Disney's creativity was in the way they retold an old story.

So what does that mean for us?

At school, students are constantly being asked for work. The basic idea here is that students are being asked to make something new. To be creative.

Now as we have seen, being creative does not mean that you have to ignore everything that has even happened in the past. For example, in art you might try and mimic the style of a famous artist in your drawing.. In History you might apply an old framework for thinking about the past to an area of History that is new.

The challenge for also those who are asked to be creative is to make sure we are totally clear about what work we have done and what is the work of someone else.

For example, in music you might say this is my version of the song Girls Just Wanna have Fun originally written by Robert Hazard.

When it comes to writing we need to do the same. It needs to be totally transparent which parts of any written text are the authors and which have been done by someone else. For example, you might submit a short story for English that retells the story of two sisters in a frozen kingdom as long as you say, this is a creative retelling of the story The Ice Queen frozen. Your creativity will not be judged on the original story, that was Danish Author Hans Christian Anderson. You will be judged on whether you do something new and interesting with the story.

So by all means, take what has gone before and do something great with it. Along the way, let's be careful to make sure that we do this in a way that makes it clear what is our work and what is the work other people.

Mr Douglas Broadbent

Director of Teaching and Learning - Senior School
