

## APPROACHING CREATIVITY



**LEAD-IN:** In pairs, discuss and answer the questions below.

Are you creative? Have you ever tried to boost your creativity? How?

Can creativity be taught or is it an innate quality?

Artists and creative geniuses are said to have a different personality, what reputation do they have?

"Your elusive creative genius" is a TED talk by Elizabeth Gilbert, author of the best-selling novel *Eat, Pray, Love* (2006). Can you guess the significance of the title? Watch the video and then, tell your partner what you remember from the talk. Exchange impressions and take notes if necessary. Tell the class.

[https://www.ted.com/talks/elizabeth\\_gilbert\\_on\\_genius?language=es](https://www.ted.com/talks/elizabeth_gilbert_on_genius?language=es)

Watch her talk again and try to answer the questions below.

1. How are creative minds typically described? What's wrong with the current definition of artistry?

2. What impact may her latest work "Eat, Pray and Love" potentially have on her writing career?

4. In this talk Ms Gilbert puts creativity in a historic context. Complete the chart.

	Ancient Greece	Ancient Rome	Renaissance
Conception of creativity			
Gilbert's assessment			

5. She talks about a Vermont poet, Ruth Stone. Why does this poet say she had to "run like hell"? What is she running from? Where is she running to?

6. How has Tom Waits' creative process changed over the years? What does Waits' anecdote represent?

## FOLLOW UP DISCUSSION

1) Do you agree with Gilbert's notion of a transcendental elusive genius?

2) Is there any risk in assuming the existence of an external force that assists artists' creative process?

3) Can you think of any advantage of Gilbert's approach to creativity?

**Script:** [https://www.ted.com/talks/sherry\\_turkle\\_alone\\_together/transcript?language=es#t-526395](https://www.ted.com/talks/sherry_turkle_alone_together/transcript?language=es#t-526395)

**Homework:** Read the script; underline new words and look them up in the dictionary.

## KEY

### 1. How are creative minds typically described? What's wrong with the current definition of artistry?

Writers have been described over the centuries as alcoholic manic-depressives, artists have a reputation of being enormously mentally unstable; magnificent creative minds sometimes die young and usually at their own hands. See Mailer's statement before he died: "Every one of my books has killed me a little more". She tries to transcend the assumption that creativity and suffering are inherently linked and that artistry will lead to anguish.

### 2. What impact may her latest work "Eat, Pray and Love" potentially have on her writing career?

It was a huge success so it's exceedingly likely that her future work will be judged as the work that came after it. This could lead her to depression and alcoholism. But she decides to look for a safe distance between herself and her anxiety about the reaction to her work (she will try to create a psychological construct).

### 3. In this talk Ms Gilbert puts creativity in a historic context. Please complete the boxes with the information you find suitable.

Ancient Greece and Rome	Renaissance:
People did not believe that creativity came from human beings but was a divine attendant spirit that came from some unknowable source for unknowable reasons (demons), In Ancient Rome creativity was conceived as a disembodied genius who would assist the artist in the world Artists were protected from excessive narcissism.	Big idea: human beings were at the centre of the universe. Beginning of rational humanism; creativity came completely from the self. Huge error in Gilbert's opinion: too much responsibility on one's psyche. Too much pressure on artists

### 5. She talks about a Vermont poet, Ruth Stone. Why does this poet say she had to "run like hell"? What is she running from? Where is she running to?

Her creative process is quite paranormal: She would hear and feel a poem come to her from over the landscape and thus she had to run like hell home and grab a pencil and a piece of paper to start writing. This poet projects her feelings onto the landscape as if she was replying to nature's call. She's humanizing nature.

There were times where she would lose the poem and others where the poem would run through her body backwards.

### 6. How has Tom Waits' creative process changed over the years? What does Waits' anecdote represent?

For many years, he was the embodiment of the tormented contemporary artist. He had uncontrollable creative impulses that were totally internalized but his creative process changed when he was older: one day, he hears a little fragment of melody, elusive and tantalizing and he longs for but he has nothing to capture it. He did something novel; he looked up to the sky and saw: Can't you see that I'm driving? This represents a belief in an external (supernatural?) source of creativity.

