



The snow on the roof. Image courtesy Visualhunt

The Snow on the Roof

A M Carley

Creativity Coaching

I trained as a creativity coach with [Eric Maisel](#) who offers these trainings to people across the world. Our cohort included students from most continents, representing many art disciplines, backgrounds, ages, and careers. Every week, we got a new set of questions to ponder and then respond to. Everyone saw what everyone else wrote. It was routinely astounding to see what came back each week — the interesting and, to me, unpredictable, ideas, observations, anecdotes, and heartfelt interpretations that our various class members brought to the group.

Is inspiration something that comes to you, or is it something you can go after?

While Maisel's course enriched my working life in many ways, it also fed my inner creative life. A big lesson from the training was this potent reminder of the value of shared creative time with a group. I always enjoy seeing it in a new setting.



The snow on the roof. Image courtesy Pixabay.

Several of us received the phrase
"the snow on the roof."

Songwriting

I got an early introduction to the phenomenon many years ago, at a summer music retreat in the Pacific Northwest where I had the pleasure of taking a songwriting class led by [Charlie Murphy](#). One day, he distributed little scraps of paper, on

which he'd written short phrases. We discovered that several of us had received the identical phrase — in my case, “the snow on the roof.”

Our little group of five or six people went off into the woods with two directives: first, to spend a few minutes in silence, jotting down our own ideas for a song inspired by those few words. Then we were to meet and together co-write a set of lyrics that combined all our ideas. I came up with some ideas about the cycle of water in nature — from rain to snow, from river to ocean — that sort of thing. To my amazement, when we compared notes, I discovered that no one else had gone there. At all. In fact, each of us had produced, in just a few minutes, a completely different approach to those words, “the snow on the roof.” One person imagined a woman adventurer in the 19th century homesteading in the American West. Another focused on a contemporary family’s mundane life. And so on. It was such a gift, for each of us to see what five other creative minds had invented, in the space of such a short time.

We cannot predict how someone else will interpret our words.

Writer Group

That lyric-writing experience has stayed with me. It helped prepare me for the [BACCA writer group](#), which has been meeting regularly since 2011. Our monthly critique meetings offer that same quality of surprise and delight. Each of us

contributes such a different take on the works in progress that our writers share with one another.

I always benefit from the responses the BACCA writers bring to my work, and trust that it's reciprocal. BACCA gives me regular reminders that we cannot predict how someone else will interpret our words. Just as "the snow on the roof" prompted unique trains of thought in the minds of our little band of songwriters all those years ago. And just as my fellow creativity coaches interpreted Eric Maisel's lessons and comments.



The snow on the roof. Image courtesy Pixabay.

The world is so much bigger and richer than we can imagine. And any one of us is capable of imagining entire worlds. So do the math. The more that we are willing to engage with the imaginations of the people around us, the more we expand our own creative life. Everybody wins.

Copyright © Anne M Carley. It's okay to quote short excerpts, with attribution like this, "Courtesy A M Carley. For full text see [URL at annecarleycreative.com]."

Blue roof image by [their](#) on Visualhunt.com / [CC BY-SA](#)

Red barn image by [Tuomas Laatikainen](#) from [Pixabay](#).

Pink house image by [pasja1000](#) from [Pixabay](#).

[*update URL*] Anne's recording of her song, The Snow on the Roof, based on her ideas from the Charlie Murphy class, is available [*update URL*] [here](#).

Republished with permission from BACCALiterary.com