

Sir Ken Robinson presents the following: hello I'm Ken Robinson I always described myself as an educator because I am I've worked in education systems all my life I've worked with school systems I've taught in universities and helped in the training and professional development of teachers in different parts the world as well and these days I write and get asked to talk quite a lot and run workshops um I've written a lot about creativity and people often say that you can't teach creativity and you can't assess it uh I remember once working with a uh a political group in the UK and the then Secretary of State for Education said to me of course the trouble about creativity is that you can't Define it and I said no I think the trouble is that you can't Define it and and I don't mean this frivolously people often make these claims because they haven't really spent much time thinking about creativity they think they know what it is and that they feel entitled to pronounce on what you can and can't do with it in schools so let me just say a couple of words about this creativity as I see it is the process of having original ideas that have value there are three bits to that it's a process it's not an event it's rarely the case it's not never the case but it's rarely the case that if you're working on a creative project that you get the exact final version at your first attempt that's true whether you're working on a mathematical theorem or a scientific hypothesis or an experiment or designing a bridge or a house or composing a piece of music it's normally a process of trial and error and we know quite a lot about that process and how it works some of the phases it typically goes through through some of the blocks to it and how you can unblock them secondly it's about original thinking it doesn't have to be original to the whole world but it certainly has to be original to you uh it may be original to your peer group it may sometimes break the way people have thought about something since the beginning of time but it's not a requirement of creativity that it has to be uh new to the planet and thirdly it's about value and people often contest this and say well whose values and that's exactly the point all processes involve evaluation making judgments about whether it feels right you can see it you know if you're writing a poem or if you're doing a design or planning a speech it's is that right you're Crossing an ey doesn't feel right it's not really what I mean I'm not sure that's quite the way to go so you're making judgments all the time so creativity isn't some free willing process from start to finish there's often um an early stage to it where you're brainstorming hypothesizing but then it's work it's crafting and it's trying again and trying to get it right so that's how I Define it now the thing is about creativity that you can be creative at anything people often say they're not creative what they mean very often in my experience is they're not very Arty you know they can't uh they can't play an instrument or or they don't paint or they don't do theater or dance all all those things in the Arts can be very very creative but you can be creative at anything you can be a creative mathematician a creative chemist a creative physicist a creative cook Chef you name it anything that involves human intelligence is a scene of possible creative achievement uh the other myth is that you can't teach it now there are two things that hinge on this one of them is that when people say you can't teach creativity I find that they're often basing that view on a very narrow idea of what teaching is if it's if by that they mean you can't teach creativity like you can teach somebody the sequence of traffic light changes or you can't teach people creativity like how to drive a car well there's some truth in that it's not a complete truth uh that you you don't teach people to be creative through direct instruction like do what I do and you'll be more creative now there are aspects of learning in any field that you need to master skills and disciplines and techniques but teaching is much more than direct instruction uh teaching is a process of enabling it's a process of giving people opportunities it's a process of encouragement it's a process of inspiration and of mentoring and I've been involved in projects all around the world in my and other places where it it's demonstrably true that gifted teachers help people to discover their creative talents to nurture them and to hone them and to become more creative as a result to understand that you can teach creativity we need a more expansive and enriched conception of what teaching is and how it actually works and when people say you can't assess it it's not true either I think it's because people again often operate on a narrow conception of creativity that it's just some free willing process that any idea will do the clue to understanding that you can assess creativity is to go back to the definition that it's about original ideas that have value and in any particular field you have to identify the criteria for originality for example you have to identify what you mean by value and I remember years ago uh I was working on a university committee and somebody saying well how would you ever judge a novel uh how would you judge how creative it is I said well you'd ask some novelists about that how would you judge a mathematical paper will you ask people who about that discipline in the field to make judgments about whether it does count as original if you look at young children's drawing you would apply different criteria than if you were assessing the success of the roof of the Cy Chapel I remember years ago at the Ted conference telling the story of the little girl who uh hardly

ever paid attention in class and in this particular class she did the teacher was running a drawing lesson and said the little girl was over in the corner and she normally didn't pay attention but she was completely absorbed and the teacher went over to her and said what are you drawing and the girl said I'm drawing a picture of God and the teacher said but nobody knows what God looks like and the girl said they will in a minute you see what I love about that story is the confidence the girl has in her own drawing well you wouldn't apply the same criteria to a 5-year-old's drawing as you would to you know a seasoned uh animator or cartoonist or an architect so you can assess creativity providing your clear on the criteria originality and of value and as soon as we get clear on those issues it can be taught it can be assessed we're then in a position to integrate it properly into the entire curriculum not as some afterthought but as a way of transforming the power of teaching and of learning