

SPINNING A YARN: CREATIVE WRITING FOR THE SOUL (C-ID ENGL 200)



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This text was compiled on 09/10/2026

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Glossary

Detailed Licensing

Detailed Licensing

Licensing

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1: FIRST CHAPTER

Why Spin a Yarn? Do you have a burning desire to create? Do you have a burning desire to escape into another world? Do you want to live another life? Do you want to be a different person? Sure, we can do all of this when we read. However, we can do all of this when we write. Unlike reading, where the narrative is already there; when we write, we are the creators of the journey. We are the makers of the lesson. We have complete control over what happens. The best part about our adventure is that it will make us immortal.

Dare I say, writing brings us closer to God. We use our voice to shape our world, and when other's read it, we shape their world to.

We spin a yarn to be world shapers, dream makers, dream breakers, and love makers.

Who wouldn't want that power?

In this book, we will explore the potential power that is in you because you too can be immortal.

[1.1: Reading and Writing Connection](#)

[1.2: Literary Techniques](#)

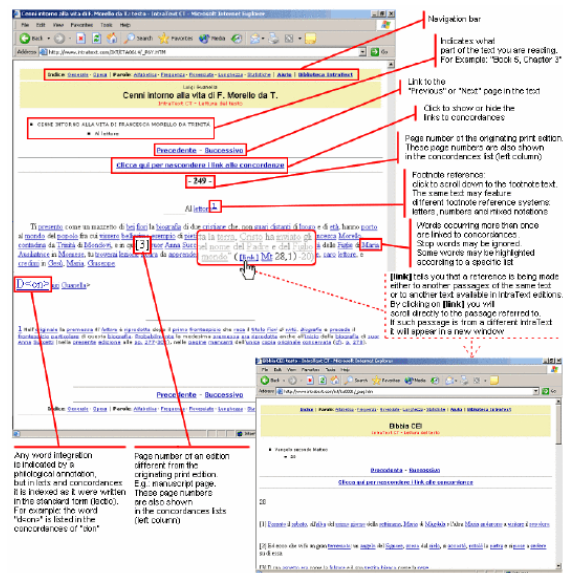
1.1: Reading and Writing Connection

This chapter covers why we read and how we read to write better. By the end of the chapter, you will be able to read like a writer, asking writer's questions and listening to a story through the writer's mind.

Most good writing starts with being a good reader. If we want to write the next great American Novel, we need to have learned the last great American Novel. We need to understand what made that novel great. We need to read those novels that aren't deemed 'great' and decide why. What didn't work as well?

We need to read with a writer's mind—a writer's eye—a writer's ear. How? By asking questions. Lots of questions. Usually the reporters' questions. Why did the writer use that word? Why did the writer use that punctuation? Why did the writer break the story here? What impact does this choice have on the reader? What impact does this choice have on the character? These are the kinds of questions readers often ask. Consider, for a moment, what questions you ask when you read. Do you read with a pen in hand—writing the questions? Highlighting word choices, stylistic choices, literary techniques?

As a reminder, some reading tools are:



Annotation Image

Annotation—reading with a pen/highlighter in hand. Highlighting or marking in some way the text and writing why in the margin of the text.

KWL Chart

Name _____
Date _____

Topic: _____

Know	Wonder	Learned
What do you think you already know about this topic?	What do you wonder about this topic? Write your questions below.	After you complete your project, write what you learned.

KWL Image

Know/Want to Know /Learn (KWL) chart—divide your paper into thirds. At the top of the first third write Know. At the top of the second third write Want to Know. At the top of the third third write Learn. Before you start reading, try to fill out the chart. Look at the title and author. Do you know anything about them? In the Know column write what you know. Then, in the second column write what you want to know. In the third column write what you learn as you read. Continue to fill out this chart as you read!

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikiped...My_journal.jpg



Journal—there a lot of ways to journal. You might do a read/stop/ respond method. This is useful for difficult readings that cause your mind to wander. Before your mind wanders, stop to write about what you just read. Writing about what we read helps provide clarity. It gives us time to think and process and helps us make meaning. You could also just write about your feelings and thoughts after you have completed the reading. However, to read like a writer, your thoughts should focus on the writers' choices and observations you have about the piece and how it unfolds. It is useful to start with your reaction to the piece first. If we get this out of the way, then we can look at the piece through a more critical lens.

Here is an example of reading strategies (annotation, K/W/L, and Journaling) using Emily Dickinson's poem "Wild Nights":

Example 1.1.1

Wild nights — Wild nights!

Why a dash? Why is "wild" capitalized?

Were I with thee

So they aren't together—who is they?

Wild nights should be

Our luxury!

Why are wild nights a luxury?

Futile — the winds —

And now we have the dashes wonder what this means

To a Heart in port —

Is she using caps to draw our attention to heart?

Done with the Compass —

Done with the Chart!

Rowing in Eden —

Interesting reference to Eden

Ah — the Sea!

Might I but moor — tonight —

In thee!

Example 1.1.2

Demonstrates the K/W/L analysis method

Know	Want to Know	Learn
Dickinson loved dashes	Why does she use dashes?	Dashes create emphasis
She never married	Is this about a real person?	words have power
Maybe was in love	why capitalize	capitalization draws my eyes

Example 1.1.3

Journal

This poem seems strange at first. Readers aren't given much to go on. We don't know if this is a man and a woman. Is it their wedding night? I don't think so because it starts with "wild nights". The use of the word wild implies that that this is passionate and primal. It is natural and not what is expected by society. It is her imagination, though, because it says, "were I with thee", which tells the reader that the couple is not together. Thus, she is imagining. Such a simple phrase yet it tells us so much. The power of the word were. Then we get the word luxury. The Oxford English Dictionary says it means, **"the enjoyment of special and expensive things"**. So, their being together means that this is special. A wild night that is special. This means it doesn't happen often, if ever. Not only that, but nothing can tear them apart. The winds, which she has set off by dashes, signifies that they are separate and special. Thus, alerting the reader to the idea that these two people can not be separated. Further, they don't want to be, or at least she doesn't. They are done with all the navigation systems. All the things required to get somewhere. They don't need them anymore because they are never going again. This whole poem is a metaphor for being in love, finding your true partner. Once you find them, you will have wild nights. You won't need anyone else. You can be together in the Biblical sense. She uses sailing to help move her metaphor forward. This is brilliant way to say you are in love forever. Pity, though, as the couple isn't together. Can they not be together? Is it forbidden? Her

poem doesn't answer this but leaves it up to our imagination to figure it out. I appreciate that she lets the reader imagine instead of telling us exactly what is what. This is the beauty of a poem. I also appreciate that each word is chosen to impart a powerful punch. It is a good reminder that we must be so conscious of the words we choose when we choose to rhyme.

Notice how the journal builds off both the annotation and the K/W/L to chart and moves us to meaning. The journal deals with making meaning of the poem and working to understand how the poem is written, and how that can translate to the writer of poetry.

Now it's your turn!

Discuss what tools you use to read—

Let's practice reading like writers—read with an analytical eye. Be sure to use tools like annotation, Know/Want to Know/Learn (KWL) Charts, reading journals etc.

Then use some of the tools to discuss an assigned short story.

Exercise 1.1.1

What did you learn about the story while reading like a writer—looking at things from as small as the language to the big things like the theme or lesson.

Some more questions you might ask:

What is the purpose of the story?

The main point?

What questions do you have?

What was your initial response?

Let's discuss the author's choices...

Does the author spend time describing the setting?

How does this choice impact the story?

How does the author introduce and develop characters?

How does the author handle dialogue?

What literary devices are used, if any?

You should now be able to read like a writer. Employ these tools each time you read. The more often you do, the better of a writer you will become!

1.2: Literary Techniques

Now let us discuss what literary techniques are. In this way we will better be able to find them when we read, reading with a writer's eye, and use them ourselves when we write.



"fruit" by the waving cat is licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 2.0](#)

Alt Text: A plate of strawberries and blueberries washed and cut up nicely.

It sounds so bland, like blanching a fruit, taking the color away and making us think. The reality is, though, it gives the color and flavor more depth. When we understand how literature works, we can enjoy it more deeply and emulate this in our own writing. So, how do we make a style? How do we convey a message? How do we become the creators of the future? In order to do this well, we should discuss literary techniques.

There are a few. Let's start with devices. Literary elements are broad devices that encompass the whole work. These are things like theme, setting, mood, allegory. We should be able to determine these when we read. Then, when we write, we should know what we have in mind before we begin. Do we always end up where we thought we would? Probably not. Should we outline. Maybe. Should we list out the path our characters will take. It is a strategy. Can we just sit down to write? Perhaps. Is there one best way to make this happen? No. We are all a unique book and how that book comes to be is the product of the unique person who made it appear. Thus, the idea that we can script how that will appear is, to me, absurd. However, we can learn from how other writers work. We can learn from what other writers do and how successful that is.

For example, perhaps you want to make a change in your world. What is the best way to do this? Does the satire Jonathan Swift employs in his essay "A Modest Proposal" work for you? Or do you want to be simple and to the point like E.B. White's essay "The Meaning of Democracy".

We should discuss a few strategies writers use (that's a malapropism—kind of--).

Point of view—there are a few. First person is I (and we). Second person is you. Third person is he/she/they. Omniscient knows everything. It is usually best to find your point of view and stick with it. Be consistent. Unless you are writing a novel and then it can change more easily.

Once you decide your point of view, you can work on what your characters are like. Are they heroes, protagonists, antagonists, evil villains? Keep in mind no one is entirely good or entirely bad. If you want your character's to be believable, they must be, human, if you will.

Setting. This is important. It puts you, your characters and your reader in the same place. If you don't describe it well, your prose won't be effective. Show your reader, don't just tell your reader. There are many ways to accomplish this. Figurative language is one such way.

Figurative language is the most common of literary devices.

Example 1.2.1

Examples of figurative language are:

Simile—comparison using 'like' or 'as': She was like a rose; as smelly as the dew.

Metaphor—comparison without using like or as: A heart in port in "Wild Nights".

Personification—giving human characteristics to non-human things: My car is tired.

Hyperbole—exaggeration: I will kill him if he is late...

Allusion—comparison to something well know: Eden in "Wild Nights".

Alliteration—repeating the same sounds, words/letters: Fountains of foam.

Onomatopoeia—words that imitate sounds: Fizzing, splat, squelch, sneeze.

Dramatic Irony—when the reader knows something the character does not: Seeing the murderer around the corner from the hero.

Verbal Irony—saying one thing and meaning another, similar to sarcasm: Referring to a hurricane as a light breeze.

Consonance—repeating consonants in sentences: "Do you like blue?"

Assonance—repeating vowel sounds: "Do you like blue?" "Indeed I do."

We may also use things like foreshadowing or flashbacks.

This is a very small list of tools writers have at their disposal. We can practice using some of these devices as our writing begins to grow (what did I do there?).

Let's start to spin a yarn.

Exercise 1.2.1

Crafting Practice Exercises

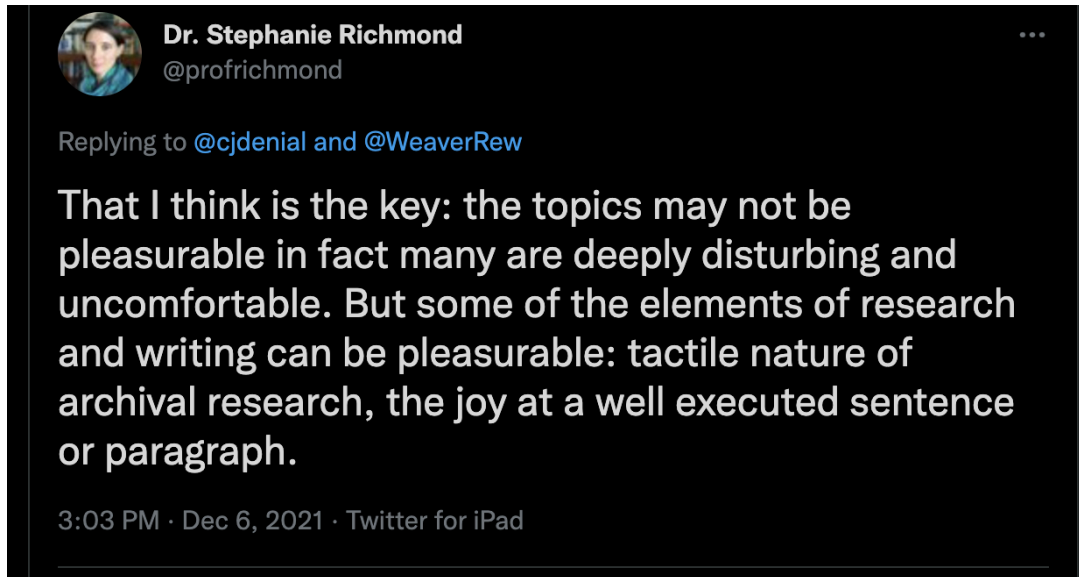
Pick one of the following exercises to try your hand at creating.

1. Book Store inspiration: Have you ever looked at the cover of a book and imagined what the story is about based on the cover? Pick a book (either screen shot the cover or describe it in great detail. Be sure to give it proper attribution (cite it). Then, create a scene based on what you think the book may be about.
2. Eavesdropping—have you ever listened in on a strangers' conversation (in line at the store, behind you in a restaurant, walking across campus)? Do so and create a scene based on what you hear.
3. In another life: imagine an alternate reality to your life. What would that be? Show us your new life.

In this chapter we began to address literary techniques; we identified what they are and we found some in literature, being reminded that we need to read with a writer's eye. We will practice these techniques when we write. There are different genres we

can write it: for example: short story, non-fiction, poetry, drama, and flash fiction. We will practice these in the rest of the book.

2: REVIEW OF ELEMENTS



If you've ever read a story, you've read from a particular point-of-view, you've dealt with various character types, imagined the setting, read dialogue, and you've seen a plot in action. So, essentially, this brief chapter sums up what you've already seen, but by reviewing this, you can understand all the variety within writing.

[2.1: Review of Elements](#)

[2.2: Your Voice](#)

[2.3: Exercises of the Elements](#)

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2.1: Review of Elements

Elements, by Type.

Points-of-view:

FIRST-PERSON VIEW¹

The first-person narrative makes it necessary that the narrator is also a character within his or her own story, so that the narrator reveals the plot by referring to this viewpoint character as "I" (or, when plural, "we"). Oftentimes, the first-person narrative is used as a way to directly convey the deeply internal, otherwise unspoken thoughts of the narrator.

"When I moved to Minnesota, I found there was a thriving and determined movement, a grassroots movement, to revitalize the Ojibwe language. And I've never come to be a competent speaker. I have to say that right now. But even learning the amount of Ojibwe that one can at my age is a life-altering experience."

---Louise Erdrich

THIRD-PERSON VIEW

Third-person narration provides the greatest flexibility to the author and thus is the most commonly used narrative mode in literature. In the third-person narrative mode, each and every character is referred to by the narrator as "he", "she", "it", or "they", but never as "I" or "we" (first person), or "you" (second-person). In third-person narrative, it is necessary that the narrator is merely an unspecified entity or uninvolved person that conveys the story, but not a character of any kind within the story being told.

"The seller of lightning-rods arrived just ahead of the storm. He came along the street of Green Town, Illinois, in the late cloudy October day, sneaking glances over his shoulder. Somewhere not so far back, vast lightnings stomped the earth. Somewhere, a storm like a great beast with terrible teeth could not be denied."

---from Ray Bradbury's *Something Wicked This Way Comes*

Omniscient Points of View / First-Person Omniscient View

A rare form of first person, where the narrator is a character in the story, but also knows the thoughts and feelings of all the other characters. It can seem like third person omniscient at times.

Multiple-Person View

Sometimes, an author will use multiple narrators, usually all of them storytelling in the first person. In stories in which it is important to get different characters' views on a single matter, such as in mystery novels, multiple narrators may be developed. The use of multiple narrators also helps describe separate events that occur at the same time in different locations.

For example, in Chuck Klosterman's *Downtown Owl*, one chapter is told by the perspective of a teacher, the next a student, the next an old man in the town. This allows the reader to see all sorts of viewpoints for one particular experience or situation.

Alternating Person View

While the general rule is for novels to adopt a single approach to point of view throughout, there are exceptions. Many stories, especially in literature, alternate between the first and third person. In this case, an author will move back and forth between a more omniscient third-person narrator to a more personal first-person narrator. Often, a narrator using the first person will try to be more objective by also employing the third person for important action scenes, especially those in which he/she is not directly involved or in scenes where he/she is not present to have viewed the events in first person.

Second-Person View

Probably the rarest mode in literature (though quite common in song lyrics) is the second-person narrative mode, in which the narrator refers to one of the characters as "you", therefore making the audience member feel as if he or she is a character within the story. [Ex: Create-Your-Own-Story books... remember those?]

"Life will break you. Nobody can protect you from that, and living alone won't either, for solitude will also break you with its yearning. You have to love. You have to feel. It is the reason you are here on earth. You are here to risk your heart. You are here to be swallowed up."

— Louise Erdrich, *The Painted Drum*



"The Protagonist" by [mønsterdestrøyer](#) is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](#).

Alt Text: Graffiti of the word "Protagonist" written on a wall

Common characters & archetypes:²

Characters can be classified by their role in the story. Some common roles are:

STOCK CHARACTER

- Standard, predictable background characters: The "best friend" of the main character.

PROTAGONIST

- The hero or central character: *Captain Marvel*, *James Bond*

ANTAGONIST

- The villain: The Bad Witch in *Wizard of Oz*.

ANTIHERO

- A protagonist without heroic qualities: Jack Sparrow in *The Pirates of the Caribbean*, Michael Scott on *The Office*.

Make your protagonist have flaws.³ Even though a hero sounds like they should be perfect, giving them something that holds them back will help readers empathize with them. Maybe your hero will do anything to save their life, even if it involves killing someone or maybe they're selfish and only care about themselves. Brainstorm common personal flaws and pick one for your character.

Let your antagonist have some redeeming qualities. Just like how heroes can't be entirely good, your villain of the story can't be completely bad. An evil villain just for the sake of being evil makes your character flat and uninteresting. Give the antagonist a redeeming quality, such as doing what they need to save their child, so a reader can sympathize with them.

Setting:⁴

Consider all 5 senses when describing your settings. Think about what characters in your story would see, hear, feel, taste, and smell. This will help you create a more vivid setting that readers will imagine the location better and feel like they are a part of it.

- Make lists of what your characters would experience when they first arrive in your setting. What sights would they see? Who would be there?

Write descriptions for each of your settings so you have an understanding of them. Work on brief paragraphs describing the landscape, people, culture, and animals for each of the locations you want to include. Think about the major set pieces in the locations and how the characters interact with them. If you need to get more detailed about wildlife or special quirks about your world, expand your notes further.

Common plots:⁵

OVERCOMING THE MONSTER

The protagonist sets out to defeat an antagonistic force (often evil) which threatens the protagonist and/or protagonist's homeland. Examples: *The Hunger Games*, *Shrek*.

RAGS TO RICHES

The poor protagonist acquires things such as power, wealth, and a mate, before losing it all and gaining it back upon growing as a person. Examples: *Cinderella*.

THE QUEST

The protagonist and some companions set out to acquire an important object or to get to a location, facing many obstacles and temptations along the way. Examples: *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Land Before Time*, *Indiana Jones*, *Harold & Kumar Go to White Castle...*

VOYAGE AND RETURN

The protagonist goes to a strange land and, after overcoming the threats it poses to him or her, returns with experience. Examples: *Alice in Wonderland*, *The Wizard of Oz*.

COMEDY

Light and humorous character with a happy or cheerful ending; a dramatic work in which the central motif is the triumph over adverse circumstance, resulting in a successful or happy conclusion. Most romances fall into this category. Examples: *Bridget Jones Diary*, *Four Weddings and a Funeral*.

TRAGEDY

The protagonist is a hero with one major character flaw or great mistake which is ultimately their undoing. Their unfortunate end evokes pity at their folly and the fall of a fundamentally 'good' character. Examples: *Bonnie and Clyde*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Breaking Bad*.

REBIRTH

During the course of the story, an important event forces the main character to change their ways, often making them a better person. Examples: *Beauty and the Beast*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Despicable Me*, *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*.

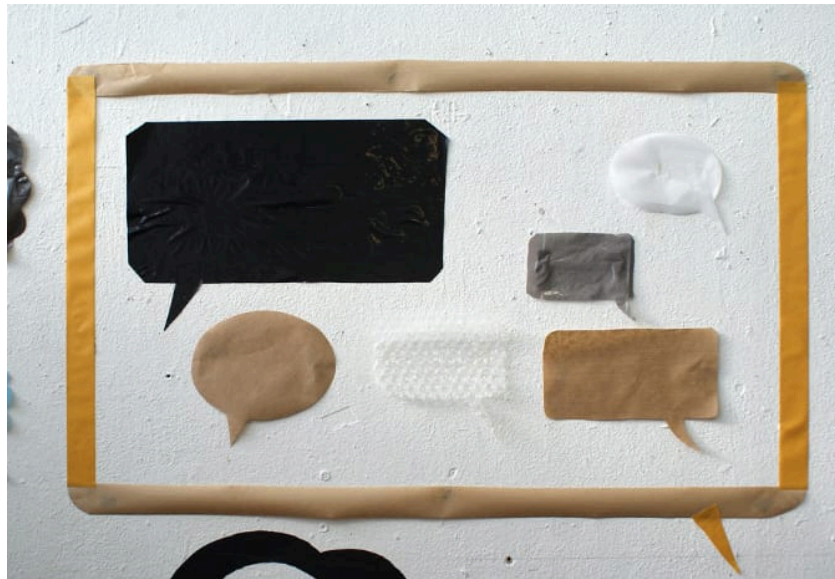
The Hero's Journey

Use **"The Hero's Journey"⁶ template for storytelling**. A Hero's Journey is a common storytelling device to make sure your main character goes through an emotional rollercoaster throughout your writing. Your hero starts in their ordinary and comfortable world, but something or someone makes them go out of their comfort zone. Throughout the story, they will hit their rock bottom before redeeming themselves and saving the day. Work through the 12 steps of The Hero's Journey for your protagonist.

- The Hero's Journey is not a set-in-stone way to write stories, but it will help guide you if this is the first time you've written.
- This works best in long-form writing, like a novel or screenplay.

Pace your story so action⁷ happens frequently. Think of your story happening in 3 acts, where the first act is what makes your protagonist go on the adventure, the second act is developing the conflict, and the third act is the resolution. You can quicken or slow your pacing by using shorter and longer chapters, adding details, or shifting to subplots.

- Use detailed language, but don't be over-explanatory or else you risk bogging down your writing.



"Speech bubbles at Erg" by Marc Wathieu is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](#).

Alt Text: Empty text bubbles on a wall

Dialogue:

Work on writing believable dialogue⁸. Take each character's upbringing, education, age, and career into consideration when you make your characters speak. Avoid using dialogue to info dump in stilted or unnatural language.

- Make sure each of your characters sounds different or else your readers will have a hard time telling which character is speaking.
- Avoid clichés like, "Are you thinking what I'm thinking?" or "I have a bad feeling about this."
- Listen to how people talk in real life, so you have an idea of how people speak. Ask if you can record a conversation and try to transcribe the audio.

Dialogue⁹ is another way to bring life to your narrative. Dialogue is conversation or people speaking in your story. Engaging dialogue goes beyond what is simply being said to include description of non-verbal communication (facial expressions, body movement, changes in tone and speed of speech) and characterization. The way people speak and interact while talking reveals much about them and the situation. Writing natural sounding dialogue is not easy. Effective dialogue must serve more than one purpose – it should:

- Drive the plot forward,
- Reveal information about the characters, and
- Build tension or introduce conflict.

Dialogue is a great way to show, rather than tell.

Basic Dialogue Rules

1. Use a comma between the dialogue and the tag line. a. "I want to go to the beach," she said.
2. End punctuation goes inside the quotation marks. a. He asked, "Where's the champagne?"
3. When a tag line interrupts a sentence, it should be set off by commas. a. "That is," Wesley said, "that neither you nor me is her boy."
4. Every time you switch to a different speaker, start a new paragraph. a. Even if the speaker says only one word, with no accompanying attribution or action, it is a separate paragraph.
5. Start a new paragraph when you wish to draw the reader's attention to a different character, even if that character doesn't actually speak.

6. For internal dialogue, *italics* are appropriate.

Sample Dialogue

"So, what was it really like?" I asked.

"I've told you. It was amazing."

I shifted to my side so I could look at her. "You have to give me more than that," I insisted, "and not the mom and dad version."

Liv mirrored my move to her side and propped up her head with her arm. Her blue eyes searched my greens, looking for the right words. "I shouldn't—"

We broke our gaze as we heard our mom call for us. Once again, I didn't get the truth.

Questions / Activities.

¹Wikipedia contributors. "Narration." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, 30 Nov. 2016. Web. 30 Nov. 2016. Text is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License.

²Wikipedia contributors. "Character (arts)." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, 20 Nov. 2016. Web. 20 Nov. 2016. Text is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License.

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⁵Wikipedia contributors. "The Seven Basic Plots." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, 20 Nov. 2016. Web. 20 Nov. 2016. Text is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License.

⁶Wikihow contributors. "How to Write Science Fiction." Wikihow. 29 May 2019. Web. 22 June 2019. <http://www.wikihow.com/Write-Science-Fiction>. Text available under Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0).

⁷Wikihow contributors. "How to Write Science Fiction." Wikihow. 29 May 2019. Web. 22 June 2019. <http://www.wikihow.com/Write-Science-Fiction>. Text available under Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0).

⁸Wikihow contributors. "How to Write Science Fiction." Wikihow. 29 May 2019. Web. 22 June 2019. <http://www.wikihow.com/Write-Science-Fiction>. Text available under Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0).

⁹Anderson, Dana. "Narration." *Writing Unleashed*, Version 1. NDSCS; 2016. CC-BY-NC-SA.

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2.2: Your Voice

Your voice

Find a tone¹⁰ of voice for your writing. Your voice is what makes your writing unique and will set you apart from other writers. Use your own life experiences and language to help shape the way you write so readers can experience how you tell a story. Your voice will depend on what point of view you're using.

- Examples of tone include sarcastic, enthusiastic, indifferent, mysterious, wry, somber, acerbic, smug, pessimistic, and so on.
- The tone can also be formal or informal. Your writing's voice can be shaped by what point of view you've written your work. For example, you may be able to use more slang or informal language if you're writing in the first person.



"2011 Diversity Conference" by OregonDOT is licensed under CC BY 2.0.

Alt Text: Two people holding hands

Holes in diversity

Once one figures out their voice – in an academic setting or not – they can start to understand the necessity of employing that voice to tell their story. This book wants to encourage ALL humans to write, whether the writing is published or unpublished. One should note, however, that some stories are not as prominent in the “literature industry” and that makes them all the more valued to be told. Here are some examples:

- People of color, especially women of color
 - Examples: Roxane Gay, Maya Angelou, Toni Morrison, Alice Walker
- First Nations / First Peoples / Indigenous Peoples
 - Example: Louise Erdrich¹¹
- Immigrants / Refugees / Migrants
 - Examples: Junot Díaz, Bharati Mukherjee, Jamaica Kincaid
- Humans who are LGBTQIA or pansexual or asexual
 - Examples: David Sedaris, Augusten Burroughs, James Baldwin
- Humans with disabilities
 - Example: Octavia E. Butler
- Humans of size, a.k.a humans who are fat

- Examples: Aubrey Gordon, Jess Baker

In particular, these types of stories seem to be missing from literature:

- Stories where one's skin color isn't the guiding factor of the plot
- Stories where the fact that characters are lesbians, or gay, or bisexual, or transgender or queer or intersex or asexual isn't the main topic of discussion
 - Example: the TV show, *Schitt's Creek*
- Stories about people with disabilities where the disability isn't the character's main "problem"
- Stories about fat people where intentional weight loss isn't in the plot at all

Questions / Activities.

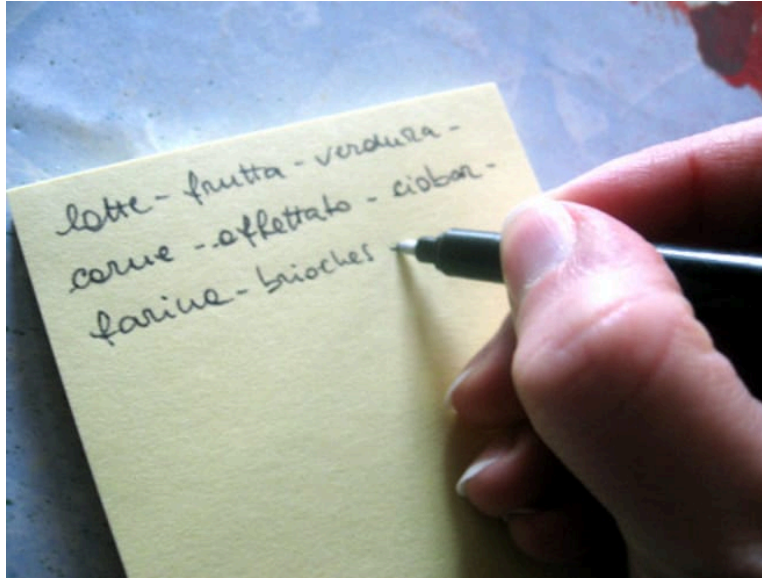
¹⁰Wikihow contributors. "How to Write Science Fiction." Wikihow. 29 May 2019. Web. 22 June 2019. <http://www.wikihow.com/Write-Science-Fiction>. Text available under Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0).

¹¹She has ties to the Wahpeton, ND area!

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2.3: Exercises of the Elements

Let's practice some of the elements, yeah?¹² These exercises cover how to create characters, think about setting and plot, create dialogue, and think about your voice.



"Grocery shopping list" by the Italian voice is licensed under CC BY 2.0.

Alt Text: person writing a list

Exercise 1: The Name Game.¹³

Here is your challenge: for the next few days, collect names. You might collect them from obituaries, news stories, random lists, and spam. Spam is great for funny names. Then go through your list, choose a name, and write a short character sketch* based off that name.

*FYI = Character Sketch: "A character sketch simply summarizes the key personality traits, background, behaviour and nature of a particular character."¹⁴

Exercise 2: Lists are your friend.¹⁵

Prep for future stories by making a list of lists.

- 5 possible endings for your story
- 5 twists
- 5 possible subplots
- 5 ways the subplots could tie into the main plot
- 5 ways the character could grow
- 5 surprising things that we could learn about a character
- 5 ways to add some unexpected elements to the book (humor, suspense, sadness, fear)
- 5 ways to describe the main setting/another setting

Exercise 3: Through another person's eyes.¹⁶

Create a setting that involves 2-3 characters. Describe the setting. Then write a paragraph from the point of one character. Now write the same interaction from another character's point of view. For example: your paragraph could involve the point of view of a convenience store clerk contrasted with a customer's point of view of the same incident.

Exercise 4: The Party.

Sketch out an outline of characters one might find at a party. Set the scene, too, and give us a few plot lines that may occur before, during, and after the party. You don't have to write the story, simply give us an outline of these pieces.

Exercise 5: Choose your Adventure.¹⁷

In a "Choose Your Adventure" book, you are forced to make a decision at each and every plot point. The decisions you make will take you down diverging paths and dictate your eventual fate. Try this if you're stuck on a plot development detail in your story. Sketch out the two different paths that a character can experience from one plot point, depending on what action he or she chooses to take.

Exercise 6: DIY.

Create your own exercise that requires students to test out the elements in this chapter. Share it with the class or teacher.

Exercise 7: The room.¹⁸

Write a description of the room you are in from a character you've created. What would the character notice first? What would they find odd? What would they love about the room? What would they dislike? Go beyond describing the physical space and capture their attitude about what they see. Let them be snarky or wax poetical. Whatever captures their emotions about the space.

Exercise 8: Your voice.

Find a nugget of writing by someone, anyone. Then translate that paragraph (or dialogue or whatever it is) into YOUR VOICE. This may be tough but ask yourself how YOU would say the things in the piece by this other person. What words would you use instead? What words need to be added or deleted? Is the tone the kind of tone you like? How can that be changed to sound more like YOU?

¹²These exercises, and any assignments found in this textbook, are all about fulfilling the goal of practicing writing anything in order to challenge ourselves AND to see what we excel in, too.

¹³[The name game](http://blog.reedsy.com) [blog.reedsy.com]

¹⁴Team Leverage Edu. "How to Write a Character Sketch?" 07 Oct 21. [Character sketch](http://leverageedu.com) [leverageedu.com]

¹⁵[Lists are your friend](http://blog.reedsy.com) [blog.reedsy.com]

¹⁶[Another's eyes](http://blog.reedsy.com) [blog.reedsy.com]

¹⁷[Setting the room](http://blog.reedsy.com) [blog.reedsy.com]

¹⁸[Choose your adventure](http://blog.reedsy.com) [blog.reedsy.com]

"Write about what disturbs you, what you fear, what you have not been willing to speak about. Be willing to be split open."

---Natalie Goldberg

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3: SHORT STORIES

In this chapter we will discuss the first of three genre types: the short story. The short story is the main type of fiction. It is similar to a novel, excepting that it is, well, short—less than 50 pages. Anything between 50-100 pages is considered a novella, and everything above that is a novel. Since writers have less time to accomplish their goals in a short story, they must be more strategic with their writing. Every word, sentence, element is essential.



3.1: Why a short story?

3.2: Flannery O'Connor (1925 - 1964)

3.3: Ambrose Bierce (1842–circa 1914)

3.4: Eudora Alice Welty (1909 - 2001)

3.5: William Faulkner (1897 - 1962)

3.6: Ernest Hemingway (1899 - 1961)

3.7: Short Story Exercises

3.1: Why a short story?

Where to begin? Is this the question of every writer? Perhaps a story comes to you in the dark of night. Do you get up and write? I might. Despite my loss of eyesight. Ideas not caught in the moment tend to shrivel and die. So walk around with a notebook, one in every car; one in every room both near and far. Journal every day. Write as much as you can. Set aside a time. It is your time. It is an investment in you. It will cost you very little, but the dividends will be great.

Stories. Short or otherwise. They need a purpose. If you are creating, find your why. Why this story? Why now? Why does your reader need to know it? Why do we need to know these characters? How do they connect us to humanity.

Humans have used stories to teach since...well, who knows, really. Since the beginning. Don't ask me when the beginning was. I don't know. It just was. And I know that there was a story.

Why was there a story? Because someone had to teach Wee Willy not to put his hand in the fire. We can't just tell Wee Willy not to put his hand in the fire. We have *show* why Wee Willy shouldn't put his hand in the fire.

A flame



Consider the difference:

“Wee Willy! Don't put your hand in the fire! “

“Why not?”

“It will burn you.”

Do you think that Wee Willy said, okay—cool. I'll avoid that at all costs.

I don't. Wee Willy doesn't really *know* what it means to be burned. So, Wee Willy will willfully put his hand in the fire.

But, if Wee Willy's wile woman of a mother said instead:

“Wee Willy, I must tell you about Wee Angus. Wee Angus didn't listen when his mam told him not to run around the fire. One windy night, when she was fetching a bucket of water, Wee Angus took to running around the fire. Faster and faster he went, drawing the cold wind with him. Before long, the fire was lost in a mix of dust and smoke and Wee Willy went wading in. No one could see him, but all could hear. The screams of the boy still puts chills in the air. High pitched they were, like that of a lost deer filled with

the terror that the bear may be near. That sound wasn't all; it wasn't the worst; the worst was the sizzle and bubble of flesh as the blood boiled and popped and exploded from inside while the child was still alive. And for those who were near, not only could hear, but they could also smell. The smell of the sizzle; the smell of the child as he cooked and he cried. For the smell of burning flesh is one we can't hide. It lingers and clings to ones every pore, and even when poor Angus was no more, we could still smell his flesh, boiling and burning; when the dust cleared, all that was left were the bones of dear Angus—a foot stuck in the cleft of the rocks that formed the fire pit, which he tripped over while running around the fire. So you see, the fire isn't a toy; we don't mess with it at all, my boy.”

I don't know about you, but I'm not running around the fire.

A note on dialogue. We need to capture the essence of each character in the words they say. Their words, and how they say them, must be owned by them. Consider wisely how you will choose the words for your characters and be sure to read it out loud, so you can hear the authentic voice you give them and ensure that voice is consistent and belongs only to them. I find it helps to become the character in my mind. I can feel their person. I'm sure the expressions on my face change as I write what they do, say and think. I get to be them for that second they run through my mind and onto my screen.

What story do you want to tell? What tale of old. What lesson have you learned that can be spun into gold?

A few masters of the genre follow. Consider “A Good Man is Hard to Find” by Flannery O'Connor. How does she handle the dialogue? How can you tell each character apart? How is she able to put you in the room/car and in the conversation? What lesson does this story teach?

3.2: Flannery O'Connor (1925 - 1964)



Image 6.3 | Flannery O'Connor, 1947

Photographer | C. Cameron Macauley

Source | Wikimedia Commons

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Mary Flannery O'Connor was born in Savannah, Georgia and lived there until 1938. An Orthodox Catholic family, the O'Connor family lived in Lafayette Square, a largely Catholic neighborhood of Savannah, mainly through the generosity of her second cousin, Kate Semmes (whom O'Connor would call "Cousin Katie"). In 1936, O'Connor's father, Edwin, was diagnosed with lupus and was hospitalized in Atlanta; his diagnosis would later force the family to leave Savannah. While Edwin sought treatment, both Regina and Flannery would often stay with family in Milledgeville.

In 1941, Edwin's death would imprint itself on O'Connor, who was close with her father. Both Flannery and her mother, Regina, subsequently moved to live at Andalusia, the maternal family farm in Milledgeville. After high school, O'Connor enrolled in Georgia College for Women (now Georgia College) in Milledgeville, where she completed a degree in English and Sociology. In college, O'Connor was active with both the literary magazine, *The Corinthian*, and the yearbook, *The Spectrum*. After college, O'Connor enrolled in journalism school at the University of Iowa but, once there, enrolled in the Iowa Writer's Workshop, where she was able to work with many of the most influential writers of her time.

At the Writer's Workshop, O'Connor established herself as one of their most promising writers, winning a book contract, as well as a prestigious Yaddo fellowship at the Yaddo Writers Colony in New York. However, after being diagnosed with lupus in 1951, Flannery O'Connor returned to Andalusia, where she remained. At the age of twenty-five, she published her first novel, *Wise Blood* (1952) and followed it up with her first collection of short stories, *A Good Man is Hard to Find and Other Stories* (1955). Her second published novel, *The Violent Bear It Away* (1960), was nominated for a **National Book Award**. Up until her death from lupus, at the young age of thirty-nine, she was working on her second collection of stories, *Everything That Rises Must Converge* (1965). In 1971, O'Connor's friend and literary executor, Sally Fitzgerald, helped publish *The Complete Stories of Flannery O'Connor* which won the National Book Award and was later awarded the Reader's Choice Best of the National Book Award (2010).

O'Connor's fiction is famous for its **Southern gothic** settings and her use of dark humor. Other themes in her fiction include the following: her relationship with her mother, life at Andalusia, and her Orthodox Catholicism. "A Good Man is Hard to Find" is O'Connor's most anthologized story and one of her most violent. The story follows a family of six that, while on vacation to Florida, encounter the Misfit, a pensive, yet troubled serial killer, and one of O'Connor's most famous characters. The Misfit states that his troubles center on Christ's claims of resurrecting the dead. In "Good Country People," Joy-Hulga, a philosophy Ph.D. with a wooden leg, tries to seduce Manly Pointer, a naïve traveling bible salesman.

6.6.1 "A Good Man is Hard to Find"

Please click the link below to access this selection:

6.6.2 “Good Country People”

Please click the link below to access this selection:

<http://faculty.weber.edu/Jyoung/Engl...y%20People.pdf>

6.6.3 Reading and Review Questions

1. What do these two stories, “A Good Man is Hard to Find” and “Good Country People,” have in common?
2. What does the Misfit mean with his final line, “She would have been a good woman. . . if it had been somebody there to shoot her every minute of her life”?

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3.3: Ambrose Bierce (1842–circa 1914)



Image 2.3 | Ambrose Bierce, 1892

Photographer | Unknown

Source | Wikimedia Commons

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Ambrose Bierce was born in a rural area of Meigs County, Ohio, in 1842. Although poor, Bierce's father owned a collection of books and instilled in his son an appreciation for the written word. Bierce left home in his teens, eager to make his way in the world, living with relatives and attempting formal education. He eventually joined the Union Army at the onset of the Civil War, serving in the 9th Indiana Infantry Regiment, eventually as a lieutenant. He survived some of the most brutal battles of the Civil War, including Shiloh and Chickamauga. After the war, Bierce settled out West in San Francisco, married, and had three children. Bierce began to write and publish a number of short stories while working at several well-known West Coast literary magazines. In 1892, he published *Tales of Soldiers and Civilians*, a collection of his war stories, many of which are considered his best works today. After suffering a number of personal losses, including the death of two of his children and a divorce from his wife, who died soon thereafter, Bierce left the States to travel to Mexico. While many fictitious stories relaying the events of his last days persist, there is no conclusive proof of his fate. He was never heard from again after late 1913.

Bierce was an **iconoclast**, a writer who was fiercely independent and who, using the power of his pen, cynically derided current trends in literature. He was sometimes referred to as “Bitter Bierce,” and his *Devil's Dictionary* (1911), compiled during most of his writing career, offered dark, satiric definitions of common words. While Bierce was praised by William Dean Howells as an important new writer on the literary scene in the 1890s, Bierce in his journalistic pieces for West Coast literary magazines could be brutal in his assessment of Howells and James, mocking them for their views on Realism, a mode which he considered too tame to tackle the breadth and depth of human experience. Not surprisingly, it is difficult to categorize Bierce's work, particularly his war stories. His fiction is aligned, at least in principle, with Realist features such as the depiction of life-like characters and authentic details of setting. However, in Bierce's war stories, the landscape often transforms beyond the objectively realistic, as Bierce probes the subjective reality of those who experience the nightmarish events most traumatically; the result is that the story moves into the realm of the fantastic or the grotesque, particularly in two of his most famous war stories, “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge” and “Chickamauga,” where Bierce lays bare the human cost of war. In “Owl Creek Bridge” and “Chickamauga,” the central civilian characters, a Southern planter and a young Southern boy, respectively, both seem to believe that they can participate in or “play” at war and remain unscathed. Whether as a result of impaired senses, naïvete, inexperience, or cultural conditioning, the characters are unable to read accurately the horror of war or to comprehend their own personal peril in “playing” war until, that is, the horror of the moment is brought home to them: facing their own imminent death or the brutal death of a loved one.

2.5.1 “Chickamauga”

One sunny autumn afternoon a child strayed away from its rude home in a small field and entered a forest unobserved. It was happy in a new sense of freedom from control, happy in the opportunity of exploration and adventure; for this child's spirit, in bodies of its ancestors, had for thousands of years been trained to memorable feats of discovery and conquest victories in

battles whose critical moments were centuries, whose victors' camps were cities of hewn stone. From the cradle of its race it had conquered its way through two continents and passing a great sea had penetrated a third, there to be born to war and dominion as a heritage.

The child was a boy aged about six years, the son of a poor planter. In his younger manhood the father had been a soldier, had fought against naked savages and followed the flag of his country into the capital of a civilized race to the far South. In the peaceful life of a planter the warrior-fire survived; once kindled, it is never extinguished. The man loved military books and pictures and the boy had understood enough to make himself a wooden sword, though even the eye of his father would hardly have known it for what it was. This weapon he now bore bravely, as became the son of an heroic race, and pausing now and again in the sunny space of the forest assumed, with some exaggeration, the postures of aggression and defense that he had been taught by the engraver's art. Made reckless by the ease with which he overcame invisible foes attempting to stay his advance, he committed the common enough military error of pushing the pursuit to a dangerous extreme, until he found himself upon the margin of a wide but shallow brook, whose rapid waters barred his direct advance against the flying foe that had crossed with illogical ease. But the intrepid victor was not to be baffled; the spirit of the race which had passed the great sea burned unconquerable in that small breast and would not be denied. Finding a place where some boulders in the bed of the stream lay but a step or a leap apart, he made his way across and fell again upon the rear-guard of his imaginary foe, putting all to the sword.

Now that the battle had been won, prudence required that he withdraw to his base of operations. Alas; like many a mightier conqueror, and like one, the mightiest, he could not curb the lust for war, Nor learn that tempted Fate will leave the loftiest star.

Advancing from the bank of the creek he suddenly found himself confronted with a new and more formidable enemy: in the path that he was following, sat, bolt upright, with ears erect and paws suspended before it, a rabbit! With a startled cry the child turned and fled, he knew not in what direction, calling with inarticulate cries for his mother, weeping, stumbling, his tender skin cruelly torn by brambles, his little heart beating hard with terror breathless, blind with tears lost in the forest! Then, for more than an hour, he wandered with erring feet through the tangled undergrowth, till at last, overcome by fatigue, he lay down in a narrow space between two rocks, within a few yards of the stream and still grasping his toy sword, no longer a weapon but a companion, sobbed himself to sleep. The wood birds sang merrily above his head; the squirrels, whisking their bravery of tail, ran barking from tree to tree, unconscious of the pity of it, and somewhere far away was a strange, muffled thunder, as if the partridges were drumming in celebration of nature's victory over the son of her immemorial enslavers. And back at the little plantation, where white men and black were hastily searching the fields and hedges in alarm, a mother's heart was breaking for her missing child.

Hours passed, and then the little sleeper rose to his feet. The chill of the evening was in his limbs, the fear of the gloom in his heart. But he had rested, and he no longer wept. With some blind instinct which impelled to action he struggled through the undergrowth about him and came to a more open ground on his right the brook, to the left a gentle acclivity studded with infrequent trees; over all, the gathering gloom of twilight. A thin, ghostly mist rose along the water. It frightened and repelled him; instead of recrossing, in the direction whence he had come, he turned his back upon it, and went forward toward the dark inclosing wood. Suddenly he saw before him a strange moving object which he took to be some large animal a dog, a pig he could not name it; perhaps it was a bear. He had seen pictures of bears, but knew of nothing to their discredit and had vaguely wished to meet one. But something in form or movement of this object something in the awkwardness of its approach told him that it was not a bear, and curiosity was stayed by fear. He stood still and as it came slowly on gained courage every moment, for he saw that at least it had not the long, menacing ears of the rabbit. Possibly his impressionable mind was half conscious of something familiar in its shambling, awkward gait. Before it had approached near enough to resolve his doubts he saw that it was followed by another and another. To right and to left were many more; the whole open space about him was alive with them all moving toward the brook.

They were men. They crept upon their hands and knees. They used their hands only, dragging their legs. They used their knees only, their arms hanging idle at their sides. They strove to rise to their feet, but fell prone in the attempt. They did nothing naturally, and nothing alike, save only to advance foot by foot in the same direction. Singly, in pairs and in little groups, they came on through the gloom, some halting now and again while others crept slowly past them, then resuming their movement. They came by dozens and by hundreds; as far on either hand as one could see in the deepening gloom they extended and the black wood behind them appeared to be inexhaustible. The very ground seemed in motion toward the creek. Occasionally one who had paused did not again go on, but lay motionless. He was dead. Some, pausing, made strange gestures with their hands, erected their arms and lowered them again, clasped their heads; spread their palms upward, as men are sometimes seen to do in public prayer.

Not all of this did the child note; it is what would have been noted by an elder observer; he saw little but that these were men, yet crept like babes. Being men, they were not terrible, though unfamiliarly clad. He moved among them freely, going from one to another and peering into their faces with childish curiosity. All their faces were singularly white and many were streaked and gouted with red. Something in this something too, perhaps, in their grotesque attitudes and movements reminded him of the painted clown whom he had seen last summer in the circus, and he laughed as he watched them. But on and ever on they crept,

these maimed and bleeding men, as heedless as he of the dramatic contrast between his laughter and their own ghastly gravity. To him it was a merry spectacle. He had seen his father's negroes creep upon their hands and knees for his amusement had ridden them so, "making believe" they were his horses. He now approached one of these crawling figures from behind and with an agile movement mounted it astride. The man sank upon his breast, recovered, flung the small boy fiercely to the ground as an unbroken colt might have done, then turned upon him a face that lacked a lower jaw from the upper teeth to the throat was a great red gap fringed with hanging shreds of flesh and splinters of bone. The unnatural prominence of nose, the absence of chin, the fierce eyes, gave this man the appearance of a great bird of prey crimsoned in throat and breast by the blood of its quarry. The man rose to his knees, the child to his feet. The man shook his fist at the child; the child, terrified at last, ran to a tree near by, got upon the farther side of it and took a more serious view of the situation. And so the clumsy multitude dragged itself slowly and painfully along in hideous pantomime moved forward down the slope like a swarm of great black beetles, with never a sound of going in silence profound, absolute.

Instead of darkening, the haunted landscape began to brighten. Through the belt of trees beyond the brook shone a strange red light, the trunks and branches of the trees making a black lacework against it. It struck the creeping figures and gave them monstrous shadows, which caricatured their movements on the lit grass. It fell upon their faces, touching their whiteness with a ruddy tinge, accentuating the stains with which so many of them were freaked and maculated. It sparkled on buttons and bits of metal in their clothing. Instinctively the child turned toward the growing splendor and moved down the slope with his horrible companions; in a few moments had passed the foremost of the throng not much of a feat, considering his advantages. He placed himself in the lead, his wooden sword still in hand, and solemnly directed the march, conforming his pace to theirs and occasionally turning as if to see that his forces did not straggle. Surely such a leader never before had such a following.

Scattered about upon the ground now slowly narrowing by the encroachment of this awful march to water, were certain articles to which, in the leader's mind, were coupled no significant associations: an occasional blanket, tightly rolled lengthwise, doubled and the ends bound together with a string; a heavy knapsack here, and there a broken rifle such things, in short, as are found in the rear of retreating troops, the "spoor" of men flying from their hunters. Everywhere near the creek, which here had a margin of lowland, the earth was trodden into mud by the feet of men and horses. An observer of better experience in the use of his eyes would have noticed that these footprints pointed in both directions; the ground had been twice passed over in advance and in retreat. A few hours before, these desperate, stricken men, with their more fortunate and now distant comrades, had penetrated the forest in thousands. Their successive battalions, breaking into swarms and re-forming in lines, had passed the child on every side had almost trodden on him as he slept. The rustle and murmur of their march had not awakened him. Almost within a stone's throw of where he lay they had fought a battle; but all unheard by him were the roar of the musketry, the shock of the cannon, "the thunder of the captains and the shouting." He had slept through it all, grasping his little wooden sword with perhaps a tighter clutch in unconscious sympathy with his martial environment, but as heedless of the grandeur of the struggle as the dead who had died to make the glory.

The fire beyond the belt of woods on the farther side of the creek, reflected to earth from the canopy of its own smoke, was now suffusing the whole landscape. It transformed the sinuous line of mist to the vapor of gold. The water gleamed with dashes of red, and red, too, were many of the stones protruding above the surface. But that was blood; the less desperately wounded had stained them in crossing. On them, too, the child now crossed with eager steps; he was going to the fire. As he stood upon the farther bank he turned about to look at the companions of his march. The advance was arriving at the creek. The stronger had already drawn themselves to the brink and plunged their faces into the flood. Three or four who lay without motion appeared to have no heads. At this the child's eyes expanded with wonder; even his hospitable understanding could not accept a phenomenon implying such vitality as that. After slaking their thirst these men had not had the strength to back away from the water, nor to keep their heads above it. They were drowned. In rear of these, the open spaces of the forest showed the leader as many formless figures of his grim command as at first; but not nearly so many were in motion. He waved his cap for their encouragement and smilingly pointed with his weapon in the direction of the guiding light a pillar of fire to this strange exodus.

Confident of the fidelity of his forces, he now entered the belt of woods, passed through it easily in the red illumination, climbed a fence, ran across a field, turning now and again to coquet with his responsive shadow, and so approached the blazing ruin of a dwelling. Desolation everywhere! In all the wide glare not a living thing was visible. He cared nothing for that; the spectacle pleased, and he danced with glee in imitation of the wavering flames. He ran about, collecting fuel, but every object that he found was too heavy for him to cast in from the distance to which the heat limited his approach. In despair he flung in his sword a surrender to the superior forces of nature. His military career was at an end.

Shifting his position, his eyes fell upon some outbuildings which had an oddly familiar appearance, as if he had dreamed of them. He stood considering them with wonder, when suddenly the entire plantation, with its inclosing forest, seemed to turn as if upon a pivot. His little world swung half around; the points of the compass were reversed. He recognized the blazing building as his own home!

For a moment he stood stupefied by the power of the revelation, then ran with stumbling feet, making a half-circuit of the ruin. There, conspicuous in the light of the conflagration, lay the dead body of a woman the white face turned upward, the hands thrown out and clutched full of grass, the clothing deranged, the long dark hair in tangles and full of clotted blood. The greater part of the forehead was torn away, and from the jagged hole the brain protruded, overflowing the temple, a frothy mass of gray, crowned with clusters of crimson bubbles the work of a shell.

The child moved his little hands, making wild, uncertain gestures. He uttered a series of inarticulate and indescribable cries something between the chattering of an ape and the gobbling of a turkey a startling, soulless, unholy sound, the language of a devil. The child was a deaf mute.

Then he stood motionless, with quivering lips, looking down upon the wreck.



"Nethebrücke in Brakel/Westf. (233/365)" by trombone65 (PhotoArt Laatzen) is licensed under CC BY-ND 2.0.

Alt Text: Bridge over creek

2.5.2 "Occurence at Owl Creek Bridge"

I

A man stood upon a railroad bridge in northern Alabama, looking down into the swift water twenty feet below. The man's hands were behind his back, the wrists bound with a cord. A rope closely encircled his neck. It was attached to a stout cross-timber above his head and the slack fell to the level of his knees. Some loose boards laid upon the sleepers supporting the metals of the railway supplied a footing for him and his executioners two private soldiers of the Federal army, directed by a sergeant who in civil life may have been a deputy sheriff. At a short remove upon the same temporary platform was an officer in the uniform of his rank, armed. He was a captain. A sentinel at each end of the bridge stood with his rifle in the position known as "support," that is to say, vertical in front of the left shoulder, the hammer resting on the forearm thrown straight across the chest a formal and unnatural position, enforcing an erect carriage of the body. It did not appear to be the duty of these two men to know what was occurring at the centre of the bridge; they merely blockaded the two ends of the foot planking that traversed it.

Beyond one of the sentinels nobody was in sight; the railroad ran straight away into a forest for a hundred yards, then, curving, was lost to view. Doubtless there was an outpost farther along. The other bank of the stream was open ground a gentle acclivity topped with a stockade of vertical tree trunks, loop-holed for rifles, with a single embrasure through which protruded the muzzle of a brass cannon commanding the bridge. Mid-way of the slope between bridge and fort were the spectators a single company of infantry in line, at "parade rest," the butts of the rifles on the ground, the barrels inclining slightly backward against the right shoulder, the hands crossed upon the stock. A lieutenant stood at the right of the line, the point of his sword upon the ground, his left hand resting upon his right. Excepting the group of four at the centre of the bridge, not a man moved. The company faced the

bridge, staring stonily, motionless. The sentinels, facing the banks of the stream, might have been statues to adorn the bridge. The captain stood with folded arms, silent, observing the work of his subordinates, but making no sign. Death is a dignitary who when he comes announced is to be received with formal manifestations of respect, even by those most familiar with him. In the code of military etiquette silence and fixity are forms of deference.

The man who was engaged in being hanged was apparently about thirty-five years of age. He was a civilian, if one might judge from his habit, which was that of a planter. His features were good a straight nose, firm mouth, broad forehead, from which his long, dark hair was combed straight back, falling behind his ears to the collar of his well-fitting frock-coat. He wore a mustache and pointed beard, but no whiskers; his eyes were large and dark gray, and had a kindly expression which one would hardly have expected in one whose neck was in the hemp. Evidently this was no vulgar assassin. The liberal military code makes provision for hanging many kinds of persons, and gentlemen are not excluded.

The preparations being complete, the two private soldiers stepped aside and each drew away the plank upon which he had been standing. The sergeant turned to the captain, saluted and placed himself immediately behind that officer, who in turn moved apart one pace. These movements left the condemned man and the sergeant standing on the two ends of the same plank, which spanned three of the cross-ties of the bridge. The end upon which the civilian stood almost, but not quite, reached a fourth. This plank had been held in place by the weight of the captain; it was now held by that of the sergeant. At a signal from the former the latter would step aside, the plank would tilt and the condemned man go down between two ties. The arrangement commended itself to his judgment as simple and effective. His face had not been covered nor his eyes bandaged. He looked a moment at his "unsteadfast footing," then let his gaze wander to the swirling water of the stream racing madly beneath his feet. A piece of dancing driftwood caught his attention and his eyes followed it down the current. How slowly it appeared to move! What a sluggish stream!

He closed his eyes in order to fix his last thoughts upon his wife and children. The water, touched to gold by the early sun, the brooding mists under the banks at some distance down the stream, the fort, the soldiers, the piece of drift all had distracted him. And now he became conscious of a new disturbance. Striking through the thought of his dear ones was a sound which he could neither ignore nor understand, a sharp, distinct, metallic percussion like the stroke of a blacksmith's hammer upon the anvil; it had the same ringing quality. He wondered what it was, and whether immeasurably distant or near by it seemed both. Its recurrence was regular, but as slow as the tolling of a death knell. He awaited each stroke with impatience and he knew not why apprehension. The intervals of silence grew progressively longer; the delays became maddening. With their greater infrequency the sounds increased in strength and sharpness. They hurt his ear like the thrust of a knife; he feared he would shriek. What he heard was the ticking of his watch.

He unclosed his eyes and saw again the water below him. "If I could free my hands," he thought, "I might throw off the noose and spring into the stream. By diving I could evade the bullets and, swimming vigorously, reach the bank, take to the woods and get away home. My home, thank God, is as yet outside their lines; my wife and little ones are still beyond the invader's farthest advance."

As these thoughts, which have here to be set down in words, were flashed into the doomed man's brain rather than evolved from it the captain nodded to the sergeant. The sergeant stepped aside.

II

Peyton Farquhar was a well-to-do planter, of an old and highly respected Alabama family. Being a slave owner and like other slave owners a politician he was naturally an original secessionist and ardently devoted to the Southern cause. Circumstances of an imperious nature, which it is unnecessary to relate here, had prevented him from taking service with the gallant army that had fought the disastrous campaigns ending with the fall of Corinth, and he chafed under the inglorious restraint, longing for the release of his energies, the larger life of the soldier, the opportunity for distinction. That opportunity, he felt, would come, as it comes to all in war time. Meanwhile he did what he could. No service was too humble for him to perform in aid of the South, no adventure too perilous for him to undertake if consistent with the character of a civilian who was at heart a soldier, and who in good faith and without too much qualification assented to at least a part of the frankly villainous dictum that all is fair in love and war.

One evening while Farquhar and his wife were sitting on a rustic bench near the entrance to his grounds, a gray-clad soldier rode up to the gate and asked for a drink of water. Mrs. Farquhar was only too happy to serve him with her own white hands. While she was fetching the water her husband approached the dusty horseman and inquired eagerly for news from the front.

"The Yanks are repairing the railroads," said the man, "and are getting ready for another advance. They have reached the Owl

Creek bridge, put it in order and built a stockade on the north bank. The commandant has issued an order, which is posted everywhere, declaring that any civilian caught interfering with the railroad, its bridges, tunnels or trains will be summarily hanged. I saw the order."

"How far is it to the Owl Creek bridge?" Farquhar asked.

"About thirty miles."

"Is there no force on this side the creek?"

"Only a picket post half a mile out, on the railroad, and a single sentinel at this end of the bridge."

"Suppose a man a civilian and student of hanging should elude the picket post and perhaps get the better of the sentinel," said Farquhar, smiling, "what could he accomplish?"

The soldier reflected. "I was there a month ago," he replied. "I observed that the flood of last winter had lodged a great quantity of driftwood against the wooden pier at this end of the bridge. It is now dry and would burn like tow."

The lady had now brought the water, which the soldier drank. He thanked her ceremoniously, bowed to her husband and rode away. An hour later, after nightfall, he repassed the plantation, going northward in the direction from which he had come. He was a Federal scout.



"VIII Encuentro Federal Aisg España Lorca" by [pacoperan](#) is licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 2.0](#).

Alt Text: Close up of a scouts uniform

III

As Peyton Farquhar fell straight downward through the bridge he lost consciousness and was as one already dead. From this state he was awakened ages later, it seemed to him by the pain of a sharp pressure upon his throat, followed by a sense of suffocation. Keen, poignant agonies seemed to shoot from his neck downward through every fibre of his body and limbs. These pains appeared to flash along well-defined lines of ramification and to beat with an inconceivably rapid periodicity. They seemed like streams of pulsating fire heating him to an intolerable temperature. As to his head, he was conscious of nothing but a feeling of fulness of congestion. These sensations were unaccompanied by thought. The intellectual part of his nature was already effaced; he had power only to feel, and feeling was torment. He was conscious of motion. Encompassed in a luminous cloud, of which he was now merely the fiery heart, without material substance, he swung through unthinkable arcs of oscillation, like a vast pendulum. Then all at once, with terrible suddenness, the light about him shot upward with the noise of a loud plash; a frightful roaring was in his ears, and all was cold and dark. The power of thought was restored; he knew that the rope had broken and he had fallen into the stream. There was no additional strangulation; the noose about his neck was already suffocating him and kept

the water from his lungs. To die of hanging at the bottom of a river! the idea seemed to him ludicrous. He opened his eyes in the darkness and saw above him a gleam of light, but how distant, how inaccessible! He was still sinking, for the light became fainter and fainter until it was a mere glimmer. Then it began to grow and brighten, and he knew that he was rising toward the surface knew it with reluctance, for he was now very comfortable. "To be hanged and drowned," he thought, "that is not so bad; but I do not wish to be shot. No; I will not be shot; that is not fair."

He was not conscious of an effort, but a sharp pain in his wrist apprised him that he was trying to free his hands. He gave the struggle his attention, as an idler might observe the feat of a juggler, without interest in the outcome. What splendid effort! what magnificent, what superhuman strength! Ah, that was a fine endeavor! Bravo! The cord fell away; his arms parted and floated upward, the hands dimly seen on each side in the growing light. He watched them with a new interest as first one and then the other pounced upon the noose at his neck. They tore it away and thrust it fiercely aside, its undulations resembling those of a water-snake. "Put it back, put it back!" He thought he shouted these words to his hands, for the undoing of the noose had been succeeded by the direst pang that he had yet experienced. His neck ached horribly; his brain was on fire; his heart, which had been fluttering faintly, gave a great leap, trying to force itself out at his mouth. His whole body was racked and wrenched with an insupportable anguish! But his disobedient hands gave no heed to the command. They beat the water vigorously with quick, downward strokes, forcing him to the surface. He felt his head emerge; his eyes were blinded by the sunlight; his chest expanded convulsively, and with a supreme and crowning agony his lungs engulfed a great draught of air, which instantly he expelled in a shriek!

He was now in full possession of his physical senses. They were, indeed, preternaturally keen and alert. Something in the awful disturbance of his organic system had so exalted and refined them that they made record of things never before perceived. He felt the ripples upon his face and heard their separate sounds as they struck. He looked at the forest on the bank of the stream, saw the individual trees, the leaves and the veining of each leaf saw the very insects upon them: the locusts, the brilliant-bodied flies, the gray spiders stretching their webs from twig to twig. He noted the prismatic colors in all the dewdrops upon a million blades of grass. The humming of the gnats that danced above the eddies of the stream, the beating of the dragon-flies' wings, the strokes of the water-spiders' legs, like oars which had lifted their boat all these made audible music. A fish slid along beneath his eyes and he heard the rush of its body parting the water.

He had come to the surface facing down the stream; in a moment the visible world seemed to wheel slowly round, himself the pivotal point, and he saw the bridge, the fort, the soldiers upon the bridge, the captain, the sergeant, the two privates, his executioners. They were in silhouette against the blue sky. They shouted and gesticulated, pointing at him. The captain had drawn his pistol, but did not fire; the others were unarmed. Their movements were grotesque and horrible, their forms gigantic.

Suddenly he heard a sharp report and something struck the water smartly within a few inches of his head, spattering his face with spray. He heard a second report, and saw one of the sentinels with his rifle at his shoulder, a light cloud of blue smoke rising from the muzzle. The man in the water saw the eye of the man on the bridge gazing into his own through the sights of the rifle. He observed that it was a gray eye and remembered having read that gray eyes were keenest, and that all famous marksmen had them. Nevertheless, this one had missed.

A counter-swirl had caught Farquhar and turned him half round; he was again looking into the forest on the bank opposite the fort. The sound of a clear, high voice in a monotonous singsong now rang out behind him and came across the water with a distinctness that pierced and subdued all other sounds, even the beating of the ripples in his ears. Although no soldier, he had frequented camps enough to know the dread significance of that deliberate, drawling, aspirated chant; the lieutenant on shore was taking a part in the morning's work. How coldly and pitilessly with what an even, calm intonation, presaging, and enforcing tranquillity in the men with what accurately measured intervals fell those cruel words:

"Attention, company! . . . Shoulder arms! . . . Ready! . . . Aim! . . . Fire!"

Farquhar dived as deeply as he could. The water roared in his ears like the voice of Niagara, yet he heard the dulled thunder of the volley and, rising again toward the surface, met shining bits of metal, singularly flattened, oscillating slowly downward. Some of them touched him on the face and hands, then fell away, continuing their descent. One lodged between his collar and neck; it was uncomfortably warm and he snatched it out.

As he rose to the surface, gasping for breath, he saw that he had been a long time under water; he was perceptibly farther down stream nearer to safety. The soldiers had almost finished reloading; the metal ramrods flashed all at once in the sunshine as they were drawn from the barrels, turned in the air, and thrust into their sockets. The two sentinels fired again, independently and ineffectually.

The hunted man saw all this over his shoulder; he was now swimming vigorously with the current. His brain was as energetic as

his arms and legs; he thought with the rapidity of lightning.

"The officer," he reasoned, "will not make that martinet's error a second time. It is as easy to dodge a volley as a single shot. He has probably already given the command to fire at will. God help me, I cannot dodge them all!"

An appalling splash within two yards of him was followed by a loud, rushing sound, *diminuendo*, which seemed to travel back through the air to the fort and died in an explosion which stirred the very river to its depths! A rising sheet of water curved over him, fell down upon him, blinded him, strangled him! The cannon had taken a hand in the game. As he shook his head free from the commotion of the smitten water he heard the deflected shot humming through the air ahead, and in an instant it was cracking and smashing the branches in the forest beyond.

"They will not do that again," he thought; "the next time they will use a charge of grape. I must keep my eye upon the gun; the smoke will apprise me the report arrives too late; it lags behind the missile. That is a good gun."

Suddenly he felt himself whirled round and round spinning like a top. The water, the banks, the forests, the now distant bridge, fort and men all were commingled and blurred. Objects were represented by their colors only; circular horizontal streaks of color that was all he saw. He had been caught in a vortex and was being whirled on with a velocity of advance and gyration that made him giddy and sick. In a few moments he was flung upon the gravel at the foot of the left bank of the stream the southern bank and behind a projecting point which concealed him from his enemies. The sudden arrest of his motion, the abrasion of one of his hands on the gravel, restored him, and he wept with delight. He dug his fingers into the sand, threw it over himself in handfuls and audibly blessed it. It looked like diamonds, rubies, emeralds; he could think of nothing beautiful which it did not resemble. The trees upon the bank were giant garden plants; he noted a definite order in their arrangement, inhaled the fragrance of their blooms. A strange, roseate light shone through the spaces among their trunks and the wind made in their branches the music of æolian harps. He had no wish to perfect his escape was content to remain in that enchanting spot until retaken.

A whiz and rattle of grapeshot among the branches high above his head roused him from his dream. The baffled cannoneer had fired him a random farewell. He sprang to his feet, rushed up the sloping bank, and plunged into the forest.

All that day he traveled, laying his course by the rounding sun. The forest seemed interminable; nowhere did he discover a break in it, not even a woodman's road. He had not known that he lived in so wild a region. There was something uncanny in the revelation.

By nightfall he was fatigued, footsore, famishing. The thought of his wife and children urged him on. At last he found a road which led him in what he knew to be the right direction. It was as wide and straight as a city street, yet it seemed untraveled. No fields bordered it, no dwelling anywhere. Not so much as the barking of a dog suggested human habitation. The black bodies of the trees formed a straight wall on both sides, terminating on the horizon in a point, like a diagram in a lesson in perspective. Over-head, as he looked up through this rift in the wood, shone great golden stars looking unfamiliar and grouped in strange constellations. He was sure they were arranged in some order which had a secret and malign significance. The wood on either side was full of singular noises, among which once, twice, and again he distinctly heard whispers in an unknown tongue.

His neck was in pain and lifting his hand to it he found it horribly swollen. He knew that it had a circle of black where the rope had bruised it. His eyes felt congested; he could no longer close them. His tongue was swollen with thirst; he relieved its fever by thrusting it forward from between his teeth into the cold air. How softly the turf had carpeted the untraveled avenue he could no longer feel the roadway beneath his feet!

Doubtless, despite his suffering, he had fallen asleep while walking, for now he sees another scene perhaps he has merely recovered from a delirium. He stands at the gate of his own home. All is as he left it, and all bright and beautiful in the morning sunshine. He must have traveled the entire night. As he pushes open the gate and passes up the wide white walk, he sees a flutter of female garments; his wife, looking fresh and cool and sweet, steps down from the veranda to meet him. At the bottom of the steps she stands waiting, with a smile of ineffable joy, an attitude of matchless grace and dignity. Ah, how beautiful she is! He springs forward with extended arms. As he is about to clasp her he feels a stunning blow upon the back of the neck; a blinding white light blazes all about him with a sound like the shock of a cannon then all is darkness and silence!

Peyton Farquhar was dead; his body, with a broken neck, swung gently from side to side beneath the timbers of the Owl Creek bridge.

2.5.3 Reading and Review Questions

1. In "Chickamauga," what is the effect, at the end, of realizing that the story has been filtered through the eyes of a child who

is deaf and mute?

2. In “Chickamauga,” how are ideas about war, glory, and the heroic absorbed by father and son in the story? Observe the use of words at the beginning of the story that are associated with war and warriors (“warrior-fire,” “adventure,” “memorable feats of discovery and conquest,” “intrepid victor,” “unconquerable,” “lust for war”). By the end of the story, how does the vocabulary associated with war and warriors change?
3. In “Chickamauga,” contrast the young boy’s viewing the scene of wounded and dying soldiers retreating from battle and his viewing the scene of his destroyed home and dead mother. What does such a shift in perspective convey in terms of how those unfamiliar with war might view it?
4. Explain the story’s title “Chickamauga,” given the fact that the battle is never mentioned in the story.
5. In “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge,” examine the measuring and passing of time in the story. What is the significance of these references to time?
6. Compare the two stories in terms of the idea of the hero. Is the idea of a hero subverted in either or both stories? If so, how?

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3.4: Eudora Alice Welty (1909 - 2001)



Image 5.14 | Eudora Alice Welty, 1988

Photographer | Mildred Nungester Wolfe

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Eudora Alice Welty was born in Jackson, Mississippi, the daughter of an insurance agent father and a retired teacher mother. Her family had moved to Mississippi from the Ohio Valley region, and Welty enjoyed an idyllic childhood spent in Mississippi with summers visiting relatives in the Midwest. While in high school, Welty published works in a national magazine before attending Mississippi State College for Women for an Associate degree, then transferring to the University of Wisconsin in order to finish her Bachelor's degree in English. After earning that degree (1929), Welty enrolled at Columbia University but could not find full time work in New York City during the depression; due to finances, she returned home to Jackson (1931) where she would reside for the rest of her life.

Once home, Welty held a series of jobs to help support her mother, including working as a publicity agent for the Works Progress Administration (WPA). In 1936, Welty published her first short story, "Death of a Traveling Salesman," in *Manuscript* magazine. After this success, she continued to publish in many prominent journals and magazines, including *Harper's Bazaar* and *Atlantic Monthly*. Her first collection of short stories, *A Curtain of Green and Other Stories* (1941), was largely well-received. Her follow-up novella, *The Robber Bridegroom* (1942), brought her national attention. Soon, Welty was receiving encouragement from fellow Mississippi native William Faulkner.

In both 1943 and 1944, Welty won the O. Henry Award, a prestigious award given for outstanding short fiction. Soon after, Welty would go on to write her classic, *The Golden Apples* (1949). After publishing *The Bride of the Innisfallen* (1955), Welty took a fifteen-year hiatus from writing fiction before returning with her novel, *The Optimist Daughter* (1972), which was awarded the Pulitzer Prize. In 1980, Welty was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom before publishing her best-selling autobiography, *One Writer's Beginnings*. Welty died in Jackson, Mississippi in 2001.

Although she won a Pulitzer Prize for her novel, *The Optimist's Daughter*, Welty is largely known as a master of short fiction. Her work engages Southern themes, often dealing with the problems of post-Reconstruction South. "A Worn Path," originally published in *Atlantic Monthly*, is one of Welty's most famous and most anthologized short stories. It transposes the hero's journey (tales in which a hero sets off on an adventure and is changed at the end) on to a seemingly simple tale of an elderly African-American grandmother, Phoenix Jackson, retrieving medication for her sick grandson.

5.17.1 "a Worn Path"

Please click the link below to access this selection:

xroads.virginia.edu/~drbr/ew_path.html

5.17.2 Reading and Review Questions

1. Do you think Phoenix Jackson's grandson is still alive? Why, or why not?
2. What is the significance of her name, Phoenix? Why is this important in the context of the story?
3. How does Welty take the details of the mundane and transform them into the mystical?

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3.5: William Faulkner (1897 - 1962)



"No Known Restrictions: Portrait of William Faulkner by Carl Van Vechten, 1954 (LOC)" by pingnews.com is marked with Public Domain Mark 1.0.

Alt Text: Portrait of William Faulkner sitting and looking away from the camera

William Faulkner is the most important writer of the Southern Renaissance. Flannery O'Connor once compared the overpowering force of his influence to a thundering train, remarking that "nobody wants his mule and wagon stalled on the same track the **Dixie Limited** is roaring down." Faulkner was born in Mississippi and raised on tales of his legendary great-great grandfather the "Old Colonel," who led a group of raiders in the civil war, built his own railroad, served in the state legislature, and was murdered by a political rival and prominent great-grandfather, the "Young Colonel," who was an assistant United States attorney and banker. Dropping out of high school, Faulkner left Mississippi to pursue his interests in drawing and poetry. During World War I, Faulkner pretended to be English and enlisted in the Royal Air Force, although he never saw combat. He picked up his poetic career after the war, ultimately publishing his first book in 1924, a collection of poetry called *The Marble Faun*. Turning his attention to fiction writing, Faulkner then wrote two timely novels. His first novel, *Soldier's Pay* (1926), explores the states of mind of those who did and did not fight in World War I. His second novel, *Mosquitoes* (1927), exposes the triviality of the New Orleans art community of which Faulkner was briefly a part. However, it is with his third novel, *Sartoris* (1929), that Faulkner made what he called his "great discovery": the fictional possibilities contained within his home state of Mississippi. Returning to Oxford, MI, with his new wife, Faulkner moved into an antebellum mansion and began turning the tales he heard growing up about his hometown and surrounding area into one of the greatest inventions in American literary history: Yoknapatawpha County.

Faulkner eventually wrote thirteen novels set in Yoknapatawpha County. Beginning with his fourth novel, *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), Faulkner began to incorporate modernist literary techniques such as stream-of-consciousness narration and non-linear plotting into his already lofty style. *The Sound and the Fury* describes the fall of the Compson family through four distinct psychological points of view, one of which is that of a young man who commits suicide, and another belonging to an illiterate who is severely mentally handicapped. As *I Lay Dying* (1930) describes the death and burial of a matriarch from the perspective of fifteen different characters in fifty-seven sections of often stream-of-consciousness prose. In *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936), four narrators relate the same story yet also change it to arrive at four very different meanings. Modernist techniques such as these enabled Faulkner to show how the particulars of everyday life in the rural American South dramatize what he saw as the universal truths of humanity as a whole. While stylistically modernist, Faulkner's collective epic of Yoknapatawpha County ultimately explores not so much the future of narrative as the human condition itself as lensed through generation-spanning histories of great and low families. Two of Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha stories are included here: "Barn Burning," an early story of the Snopes family about whom Faulkner would eventually write a trilogy of novels; and "A Rose for Emily," one of his many tales about the decline of formerly-great Southern families. These short stories are good representatives of both the range of Faulkner's style and his ambition as a storyteller. In deeply regional tales that are at once grotesque, tragic, brilliant, profound, loving, and hilarious,

Faulkner leads us to the source, as he once put it, from which drama flows: “the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself.”

5.16.1 “A Rose for Emily”

Please click the link below to access this selection:

xroads.virginia.edu/~drbr/wf_rose.html

5.16.2 “Barn Burning”

Please click the link below to access this selection:

www.griffinhighschool.org/wp-.../12/Barn-Burning-by-William-Faulkner-1.pdf

5.16.3 Reading and Review Questions

1. At the end of “Barn Burning,” what is young Sarty running from? Why does he not look back?
2. Why does Abner Snopes burn barns?
3. Why is the discovery of the single grey hair at the end of “A Rose for Emily” significant?
4. Faulkner received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1950. In his award speech, he lamented that many of America’s young authors had forgotten “the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself which alone can make good writing.” Discuss how “Barn Burning” and “A Rose for Emily” show the human heart in conflict with itself.
5. How does Faulkner represent the relationship between parents and children in “Barn Burning”?

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3.6: Ernest Hemingway (1899 - 1961)



Image 5.10 | Ernest Hemingway, 1923

Photographer | Unknown

Source | Wikimedia Commons

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Ernest Hemingway was born and raised in Oak Park, Illinois, an affluent suburb of Chicago. His father, who was prone to depression and would later commit suicide, was a physician and his mother was a singer turned music teacher. Because Hemingway's father was an avid outdoorsman, the family spent many of their summers in northern Michigan, which is where Hemingway set many of his short fiction, including the Nick Adams stories.

In 1917, Hemingway, at that time a writer for *The Kansas City Star*, was eager to join the Armed Forces to fight in the Great War (World War I) but was medically disqualified. Undiscouraged, he joined the ambulance corps and served on the Italian front. During shelling, Hemingway received a shrapnel injury but still carried a comrade to safety and was decorated as a hero.

When Hemingway returned to the States, living ultimately in Chicago, he fell under the mentorship of fellow modernist, Sherwood Anderson, who encouraged Hemingway to move to Paris. In 1920, Hemingway married Hadley Richardson; soon afterwards, the couple left for Paris. Surrounded by other writers of the period, such as Gertrude Stein, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ezra Pound, Hemingway used these connections to help develop his own writing career. With F. Scott Fitzgerald's help, Hemingway published his first novel *The Sun Also Rises* (1926) to great acclaim. The novel established Hemingway's simplistic writing style while expressing the frustration that many felt about World War I. His second novel, *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), another critical success, once again, captured the disillusionment of the modernist period.

While Hemingway had a turbulent personal life, filled with divorces and failed relationships, he continued to write successful works including several collections of short fiction, for which he was well known, as well as novels and non-fiction. Some of his many works are *Death in the Afternoon* (1932), bringing bullfighting to a larger audience; *To Have and Have Not* (1937); and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940), a classic novel on the Spanish Civil War. In 1952, Hemingway wrote what many consider to be his finest work, *Old Man and the Sea*, which was awarded the Pulitzer Prize and led to his Nobel Prize for Literature in 1954. In 1961, after struggling with depression for years, Ernest Hemingway took his own life in Ketchum, Idaho. In 1964, Scribners published his posthumous memoir, *A Moveable Feast*, which details both Hemingway and Hadley's expatriate life in Paris during the modernist period.

Hemingway's writing was well known stylistically for its short declarative sentences and lack of detail. Hemingway often said this style based on his iceberg approach to narrative, where, like an iceberg, ten percent of the story was on the surface and ninety percent was under the water. Hemingway attributes this style to his time spent as a journalist. Due to his distinctive style, Hemingway remained an immensely popular writer and his novels were not only critically acclaimed but also best sellers. In both "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" and "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," Hemingway writes about couples on safari in Africa and both stories feature couples with troubled relationships. These two stories are great examples of Hemingway's technique since it is clear to the reader that the narrator is leaving out many details about the characters' history.

5.12.1 “The short happy life of Francis Macomber”

Please click the link below to access this selection:

[The short happy life of Francis Macomber](https://m.learning.hccs.edu) [m.learning.hccs.edu]

5.12.2 “The snows of Kilimanjaro”

Please click the link below to access this selection:

xroads.virginia.edu/~drbr/heming.html

5.12.3 Reading and Review Questions

1. Looking at the two stories, side by side, what similarities do you notice between Macomber and Harry? What message is Hemingway trying to send to readers?
2. Do you notice any similarities between Margaret Macomber and Helen as well?
3. Hemingway is often accused of being a chauvinistic writer, after reading these two stories do you think this is a fair critique? Does he have a preference for his male characters? Are his female characters fully formed and believable?

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3.7: Short Story Exercises

Crafting Practice Exercises

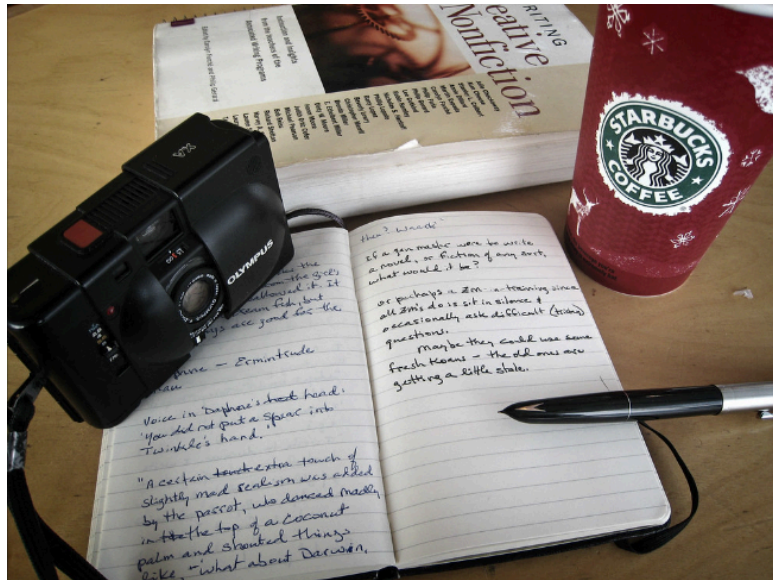
Pick one of the following to spin your yarn; keep in mind the elements of literature we have been discussing! Develop your characters and remember to show, not just tell, their stories.

1. High School Drama: Imagine a day in the life of a high school teen. What story (lesson) do they learn that needs to be told?
2. Momma Drama: Imagine a day in the life of a mom (or dad); what story (lesson) do they learn that needs to be told?
3. Love Potion Number 9: What lesson in love can you give to a friend?

We have looked more carefully at what makes a short story work and why we have short stories. We used literary elements to practice creating our own short stories. Now we will look at poetry!

4: NONFICTION

Nonfiction¹⁹ is content (often, in the form of a story) whose creator, in good faith, assumes responsibility for the truth or accuracy of the events, people, and/or information presented. Authors of such accounts genuinely believe or claim them to be truthful at the time of their composition or, at least, pose them to a convinced audience as historically or empirically factual.



"Creative Nonfiction" by Gene Wilburn is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Alt Text: A person who has written in a journal with coffee and a camera next to them

4.1: Nonfiction

4.2: Nonfiction Exercises

¹⁹Wikipedia contributors. "Non-fiction." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, 14 Nov. 2016. Web. 14 Nov. 2016. Text is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License.

4.1: Nonfiction

Common literary examples of nonfiction include expository, argumentative, functional, and opinion pieces; essays on art or literature; biographies; memoirs; journalism; and historical, scientific, technical, or economic writings.

Journals, photographs, textbooks, travel books, blueprints, and diagrams are also often considered non-fictional. Including information that the author knows to be untrue within any of these works is usually regarded as dishonest. Other works can legitimately be either fiction or nonfiction, such as journals of self-expression, letters, magazine articles, and other expressions of imagination. Though they are mostly either one or the other, it is possible for there to be a blend of both. Some fiction may include nonfictional elements.

What is a "life" when it's written down? How does memory inform the present? Why are autobiographies and memoirs so popular?

Distinctions:

Simplicity, clarity and directness are some of the most important considerations when producing nonfiction. Audience is important in any artistic or descriptive endeavor, but it is perhaps most important in nonfiction. In fiction, the writer believes that readers will make an effort to follow and interpret an indirectly or abstractly presented progression of theme, whereas the production of nonfiction has more to do with the direct provision of information. Understanding of the potential readers' use for the work and their existing knowledge of a subject are both fundamental for effective nonfiction.

Elements

Here are some typical elements in nonfiction pieces:

- Factual information, according to what the writer remembers
- Reflection
- Organization: if not chronological, it should still make sense to reader
- Quality content: the details/description should be concise and vivid
- Dialogue (optional)

A Student Example of Nonfiction²⁰

We were sitting in the living room when it happened, and I was so nervous I could have exploded. My heart was in my mouth, and the pounding of it made me so anxious I struggled to get the words out. But I had to say it. I had no choice. I'd never been extraordinarily brave, but when something was necessary, I could do it.

"Do you even love me anymore?", I asked him, looking down. My voice didn't sound like my own.

I knew his answer long before he said it. He paused, and that silence was hours, years, and endless nights. The end of a relationship with someone I adored with all my heart, but who didn't adore me. His dark eyes found mine, and, very quietly, he answered.

"No," he said. He couldn't look at me, and instead focused his eyes down on the floor. I thought he was a coward. I wasn't angry about it at the time, but disgusted. He had been blatantly unhappy in our relationship for so long, but didn't have the guts to end it. When you find a wounded animal you don't drag out their pain. You do the humane thing and shoot them, ending their suffering. You give them peace. And he was a coward who never had the strength to end mine.

I always despised crying. I was raised in a broken home, one where crying loudly would be met with blind drunken anger. So when he finally admitted what I had known for too long, I kept my cool. I swallowed those feelings into a pit and held them there. I didn't want them anyways. Nobody likes to feel hurt or weak.

“Okay. I’m moving out today then.”, I said. Cordially, cool-ly. Like this was a business meeting between coworkers rather than a break-up.

I called my friend, Kaity, and asked her if I could stay with her. She accepted. My roommate-ship with her would not last very long. After it ended I would live with my good friend Parsheana before she moved out and I lived alone. When we were roommates I met some of her band friends from Hazen, including my now-boyfriend Ethan. My happiness with him always makes me wish I left David sooner. Everyone in the world deserves to be with someone who loves them.

When I looked back years later, I could never find where it went wrong. I still can’t. When did our relationship turn, from late night dates with Chinese food and video games, into mean remarks about my body? I used to sit behind David on the couch as he sat on the floor, and hunch over him. I would rest my head on his shoulder and twine my fingers through hair. I loved him.

Becoming best friends with David saved me. I got away from my step-family, who promptly kicked me out three weeks after I told them I had a boyfriend. He helped me see that life wasn’t so bad. It wasn’t stupidly pointless. David wrapped me in his arms and understood that feeling. He had the scars on his arms to prove it. And he was my best friend, but somewhere after our one-year anniversary he stopped being happy. He started saying negative things about me. He stopped sleeping in the same bed, arguing that he wanted to stay up and play games all night. He started pulling away with irritation when I touched him.

I’ll never forget one of the first times that David said something mean to me. I can’t remember if it was the very first, but I think it was close. His words turned me into a statue. Remembering them brings back that feeling. It’s like they’re frozen deep in my brain. I was trying on some new summer clothes, some capris and a t-shirt. He and his friend Christian were playing PlayStation in the living room. I wanted to show off my new clothes, and went out to the living room. I was confident. I felt cute, and I liked wearing capris a lot so I was rocking them. I got David’s attention, and he looked at me, and said something I never expected him to say.

“Wow, you need to lose weight,” he said. Nonchalantly, like his behavior was completely normal.

Ouch. I really did freeze up. It’d have been easier to have been slapped across the face, in a way. Christian stopped playing PlayStation and looked at me. He wasn’t the best guy, and had a bad habit of fucking around on his girlfriends, but he had a heart. He had faults, but putting down his girlfriends wasn’t one of them. The look he gave me was full of sympathy. That look did it. Staring into Christian’s blue eyes pulled me out of my frozen trance. I began to tear up before heading back into the bedroom. David followed me, and told me all about how “he wanted the best for me”, and he “wanted to help”. Swearing that he loved me and apologizing.

After that happened the comments became pretty regular. When you read about abuse you learn that it escalates a little at a time until it becomes normal. Well, him saying that to me normalized it, and made it regular. Suddenly it was all about me being too fat. [...] I wasn’t horrendously overweight or anything, but the comments did their toll on my self-esteem. I started to hate myself and every curve I had.

It hurt to take that leap and force him to admit he didn’t want to be with me anymore, but those words ripped off the band-aid. It wasn’t easy to heal. Going through a breakup and living on my own forced me to be more independent. I have this journal entry from that time period where I wrote about how lost I felt. I didn’t know who I was and I was just going through the motions. I got my GED because I should, accepted a promotion at work because it paid well, and started college.

Eventually I figured it out, but when I think about this chapter of my life now I think of self-discovery. Leaving David took courage, and everything that came after took even more. I learned to deal with stressful adult responsibilities on my own. Bills, cleaning, and car troubles kept me busy, but it was peaceful. I focused on myself. In the start of my next relationship I stood my ground when I didn’t like something, and I still do.

My experiences with my ex taught me that your love for others should not dull the love you have for yourself. For, at the end of the day you should feel good about who you are. There will be times in life where you have to stand alone, where it gets hard to carry on, and in those times you have to hold yourself up. You have to be resilient and look out for yourself. You are your own person, and can be anything you want to be, and I choose to wake up and be myself and find joy in doing so. As Dr. Seuss once said, “There is no one alive who youer than you!”. My breakup with David helped me realize this, because it pushed me out of being who I was. I was comfortable and co-dependent. It made me a better person. One that is stronger and knows who I am.

²⁰This piece of nonfiction by Jamie Olson is licensed CC-BY-NC-SA; it was created for NDSCS English 211 in the Spring of 2021. The prompt for this project was “Write about an event that changed you.”

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4.2: Nonfiction Exercises

Exercise 1: Jekyll and Hyde.²¹

Describe yourself twice. Once as the hero and once as the antagonist.

Exercise 2: Sweater.²²

Describe your favorite item of clothing. Is it a favorite because of how it feels, how it looks, or because of an event you wore it to? What do you think the item of clothing shows about you?

Exercise 3: Blue.²³

You are talking to a blind man who asks you to describe the color of the sky. Write down what you would tell this man without once using the word "blue" in your explanation.

Exercise 4: Translate your Memories.²⁴

Study an old photo of yourself or your family from your childhood. It's probably easy to remember the who, the where, the what. But for this exercise we want to go deeper. Close your eyes and remember the details of the event. How did you feel when anticipating the event? How did you feel if it was a surprise? How did you feel if it didn't turn out as you anticipate? How did others at the event treat you? How did you react to them? Now, translate those FEELINGS into an event, place, child that would take place today.

Exercise 5: The Food Critic.²⁵

Write a review of a restaurant at which you recently ate. Describe the food as much as you can. Feel free to be eviscerating as well.

Exercise 6: Your Name.

Why do you have the first name you have? What is the story behind it? What is the history behind your last name? (You might have to interview family for this.)

²¹[Jekyll and Hyde](#) [blog.reedsy.com]

²²[Sweater](#) [blog.reedsy.com]

²³[Blue](#) [blog.reedsy.com]

²⁴[Translate your memories](#) [blog.reedsy.com]

²⁵[The food critic](#) [blog.reedsy.com]

Sometimes the words come out of my fingers better than they come out of my mouth.

5: POETRY

Poetry—the language of lovers. So they say. Don't ask me who they is, anyway. Many people are afraid of poetry, but we shouldn't be. Poetry is just a song that forgot to add music. Maybe the music is there, in your ear; as you read it ; as you write it. It floats out of your heart and onto your paper. There it will stay-- solid and safer. Poems can be long; epic in fact. Poems can be short; as short as a cat, or a rat or a hat—what do you think of that. Silly I suppose; maybe I should just stick to prose. Who knows. I decided to rhyme and then it just kept coming. I'm sorry for you, but now I must be running.

Writing a poem requires that we listen to the rhythm of life. The ebb and flow of breath and death. In this state we will find a poem. Don't over think it. Just let it come to you. Then, when you are done, then read your poem like we read the poems of published authors. How does your diction impact the meaning? What of your title—did you write it to make us feel? Did you choose a rhyme scheme? Did you choose no rhyme scheme? Did you tell a lesson or did you drown a sorrow—never forgotten; at least until tomorrow.

In this chapter we will discuss the elements of poetry, analyze how author's write poems, and practice writing a poem of our own.

5.1: Poetry

5.2: William Carlos Williams (1883 - 1963)

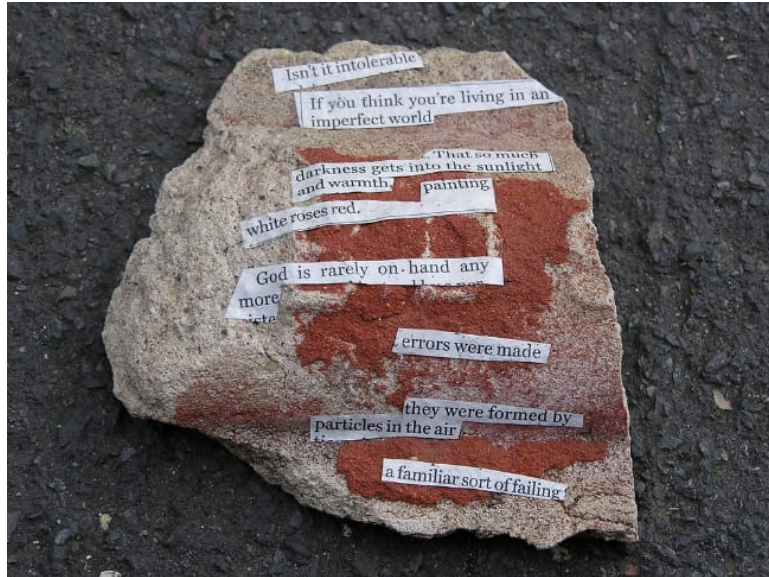
5.3: Emily Dickinson (1830 - 1886)

5.4: e.e. cummings (1894 - 1962)

5.5: Langston Hughes (1902 - 1967)

5.6: Poetry Exercises

5.1: Poetry



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Alt Text: poetry on a rock

Reading to Write Poetry

Muriel Rukeyser says in *The Life of Poetry* that in order to successfully read a poem, we must give a poem “a total response.” This means giving it all of our attention, taking it in slowly, reading it several times. It means listening to the poem openly, without judgment, and without projecting our own assumed meanings onto it, but rather as Rukeyser writes, coming “to the emotional meanings at every moment.” As she explains, “That is one reason for the high concentration of music, in poetry.”

To come to emotional meanings at every moment means to adjust and react to the way a poem takes shape with every word, every line, every sentence, every stanza. Each poem creates its own universe as it moves from line to line. It is a universe that Rukeyser describes as the “universe of emotional truth.” So how exactly does one listen with his or her emotions?

Reading is one of the most intimate forms of connection we can have with someone. We take their words—their breath—into ourselves. We shape the words with our own bodies and, too, give them life with our own breath. Reading poetry, we breathe in what a poet breathes out. We share breath. The words and their meanings become part of our body as they move through our mind, triggering sensations in our bodies that lead to thoughts. And through this process, we have experiences that are new and that change us as much as any other experience can.

Poetry is a condensed art form that produces an experience in a reader through words. And though words may appear visually as symbols on the page, the experience that poems produce in us is much more physical and direct. The elements of poetry permit a poet to control many aspects of language—tone, pace, rhythm, sound—as well as language’s effects: images, ideas, sensations. These elements give power to the poet to shape a reader’s physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual experience of the poem. Because form and function are so closely intertwined, it is impossible to paraphrase a poem. We must read poems with full concentration and focus more than once. It is why we must read them out loud. It is why we must be attentive to every aspect of the poem on both ends: as a writer, and as a reader.

Readers come to the page with different backgrounds and a range of different experiences with poetry, but it is how we read a poem that determines our experience of it. By “read” I do not mean understand or analyze, but rather, the actual process of coming to the poem, ingesting its lines, and responding emotionally.

Be a Good Listener

Discussion

I'm willing to bet that all of us have heard someone described as a "a good listener" in our lifetimes. Well, what is it that makes someone a good listener? List the qualities we associate with good listening skills and share your experiences of people who demonstrate these skills. In contrast, what makes someone a "bad listener"? How can we relate these concepts to reading a poem?

Being a good listener requires many of the same traits as being a good reader. When we listen to someone speak, we listen to their emotions and ideas through meaning and tone, body gestures, and emphasized words. We do not judge. We do not interrupt. We may touch the speaker's arm to express care. We certainly use facial expressions and gestures to let the speaker know we are listening and understanding, that we are advancing emotionally alongside them with each turn of the story. Before offering advice, condolences, or other reactions, we as listeners try to see their perspective and its complexities from their side. We take our identities out of the equation and place their concerns in the middle of our attention.

Every poem has a speaker that seeks connection with a listener. A poet seeks to create an emotional experience in the reader through the poem's process, just as if a friend—or stranger—were telling an intense story. Unlike a person speaking, who can use the entire body to gesture, poetry has only a voice to rely on to speak. Yet the poem seeks to speak to a reader as if it had a body. The poem uses rhythm, pauses, stresses, inflections, and different speeds to engage the listener's body. As readers, it is our role to listen to the speaker of the poem and to *embody* the words the speaker speaks with our own self as if we are the ones who've spoken. We as readers identify with the speaker, with the voice of the poem. We listen with what John Keats called a "negative capability," meaning we are capable of erasing our own identity and ego in order to imagine what it is like to take on another. Although Keats used the term to apply to the writing side of poetry, it is useful to consider the concept in terms of the reading side of the equation, as well.

Like individuals, each poem's speaker speaks from a place of perspective, a place which can be physical and/or psychological. As we as readers move word to word, line to line, we must allow the universe of the poem to take root in our imaginations as if it is the only universe that exists. When we are open to the words' music and meaning, the poem has the potential to envelop our entire being and body, as poet Emily Dickinson expresses in one of [her letters](#):

If I read a book [and] it makes my whole body so cold no fire can ever warm me I know *that* is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know *that* is poetry. These are the only way I know. Is there any other way.

Dickinson speaks of the poem affecting her entire body and being. Great poetry does this, as Rukeyser explains, because of the musical language, one the most important properties of poetry. Music is seductive. Music is instinctual beyond language. Music is a universal language. When accompanied by language, it has the power to affect our **senses** and our sensibility in intense ways.

How to Conduct a Close Reading of a Poem

The Title Matters

Reading a poem, we start at the beginning—the title, which we allow to set up an expectation for the poem in us. A title can set a mood or tone, or ground us in a setting, persona, or time. It is the doorway into the poem. It prepares us for what follows. How would you describe the tone of each of the following titles?

Exercise 5.1.1

Discussion

Look at the following titles and discuss the reactions and expectations they create:

- Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening
- Happiness
- Wishes for Sons

- Riot Act, April 29, 1992
- Reckless Sonnet
- Pissing Off the Back of the Boat into the Nivernais Canal
- How Much Is This Poem Going to Cost Me?
- The Turtle
- A Blessing
- Girl Friend Poem #3
- Sex at Noon Taxes
- The Tree of Personal Effort

Answer available at the end of this section.

The First Time Through

Upon a first reading, it's important to get an idea of what it is you are entering. *Read* the poem out loud. *Listen* for the general, larger qualities of the poem like tone, mood, and style. *Look up* any words you cannot define. *Circle* any phrases that you don't understand and *mark* any that stand out to you. Some questions we may ask ourselves include:

Example 5.1.1

1. What is my first emotional reaction to the poem?
2. Is this poem telling a story? Sharing thoughts? Playing with language experimentally? Is it exploring one's feelings or perceptions? Is it describing something?
3. Is the tone serious? Funny? Meditative? Inquisitive? Confessional? Here is a list of tonal descriptors that may help you pin down what you're hearing:
 - Abrasive, accepting, admiring, adoring, angry, anxious, apologetic, apprehensive, argumentative, awe-struck
 - Biting, bitter, blissful, boastful
 - Candid, childish, child-like, clipped, cold, complimentary, condescending, critical
 - Despairing, detached, didactic, direct, discouraged, doubtful, dramatic
 - Fearful, forceful, frightened
 - Happy, heavy-hearted, horrified, humorous
 - Indifferent, ironic, irreverent
 - Loving
 - Melancholic, mysterious
 - Naïve, nostalgic
 - Objective, optimistic, peaceful, pessimistic, playful, proud
 - Questioning
 - Reflective, reminiscent
 - Sad, sarcastic, satirical, satisfied, seductive, self-critical, self-mocking, sexy, shocked, silly, sly, solemn, somber, stunned, subdued, sweet, sympathetic
 - Thoughtful, threatening
 - Uncertain, urgent
 - Whimsical

These initial questions will emotionally prepare you to be a good listener. When we come to a text, though we release ourselves of any preconceived judgments, we do come prepared emotionally. Picking up a book of fiction is different than opening a book of nonfiction essays. Within us there is an ever-so-slight yet important preparation. Think about it. Although both nonfiction and fiction share similar writing tropes, how would you feel if someone told you that the nonfiction book you are reading—the one that brought you to tears—is not nonfiction, but actually fiction? Most people become upset. It feels like you've been lied to. To put it another way, think about how differently you prepare to engage with a performance depending on its genre. How do you set yourself up differently for a stand-up comic as opposed to an opera? Not only are the effects of the performance different, but the way we emotionally prepare ourselves to receive them is also different.

Let's begin to apply our approaches to the following poem by Stephen Dunn:



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Alt Text: Flowers on a tree

Exercise 5.1.2

The Insistence of Beauty²⁶

The day before those silver planes
came out of the perfect blue, I was struck
by the beauty of pollution rising
from smokestacks near Newark,
gray and white ribbons of it
on their way to evanescence.

And at impact, no doubt, certain beholders
and believers from another part of the world
must have seen what appeared gorgeous—
the flames of something theirs being born.

I watched for hours—mesmerized—
that willful collision replayed,
the better man in me not yielding,
then yielding to revenge's sweet surge.

The next day there was a photograph
of dust and smoke ghosting a street,
and another of a man you couldn't be sure
was fear-frozen or dead or made of stone,

and for a while I was pleased
to admire the intensity—or was it the coldness?—
of each photographer's good eye.
For years I'd taken pride in resisting

the obvious—sunsets, snowy peaks,
a starlet's face—yet had come to realize
even those, seen just right, can have
their edgy place. And the sentimental,

beauty's sloppy cousin, that enemy,
can't it have a place too?
Doesn't a tear deserve a close-up?
When word came of a fireman

who hid in the rubble
so his dispirited search dog
could have someone to find, I repeated it
to everyone I knew. I did this for myself,
not for community or beauty's sake,
yet soon it had a rhythm and a frame.

Begin with the title: "The Insistence of Beauty." What does this title do to you? What kind of expectations and tone does it set up?

Perhaps you expect a poem about beauty, or because it is the "insistence of" you may feel determination, or like beauty is up against some other force. Or maybe you expect a poem about art.

Then ask and begin to answer these questions:

1. What is my first emotional reaction to the poem?
 - There is no one answer to this, obviously. But maybe you feel loss. Or hope. Or desperation. Or sadness. Or admiration. Maybe you're confused or feel a combination of these.
2. Is this poem telling a story? Sharing thoughts? Playing with language experimentally?
 - This poem seems to be telling a story. The poem contains a sequence of events: "The day before"; "I watched for hours"; "the next day." The speaker is sharing emotional reactions to something, as well as his actions to an event.
3. Is the tone serious? Funny? Meditative?
 - It seems serious, inquisitive, and confessional. It's not humorous and isn't experimental.

Images and Tone

After an initial introduction to the poem, read slowly and allow the meanings to emerge as you move from line to line, paying attention next to images and **tone**. Before moving ahead, ask what your emotional response is at the end of each line, as lines can create different meanings and give the poem complexity.

Example 5.1.2

For instance, in the following stanza, we respond one way to the first two lines' image, and another way after its turn to the third line:

The day before those silver planes
came out of the perfect blue, I was struck
by the beauty of pollution rising
from smokestacks near Newark

In the second line, the phrase "I was struck" forms an image with what precedes before it can form an image with what follows. This second line leaves us with the image of the speaker being struck by something. It might be different for you, but because I am holding the image of a plane in my mind, a plane being a large and physical object, I immediately imagine the speaker being "struck" physically by an object. Therefore, we momentarily hold the image of being struck physically: "The day before those silver planes / came out of the perfect blue, I was struck."

But when we move to the third line, the image changes. The speaker is no longer struck by an object, but by an emotion or idea: the “beauty of pollution rising.” Although we may think of pollution as ugly, here we are being told that it is beautiful. The word reverses our assumptions; maybe we see in our mind’s eye the clichéd image of smog rising from smokestacks and ask, “How is that beautiful?” Or maybe we think about how smog makes the colors of sunsets more intense. Either way, the speaker is telling us that he sees pollution as beautiful even with all of its complications (it’s harmful, smelly, ugly, etc.). Rather than leave us with only the speaker’s judgement of pollution, the next lines create for us an image of that “beauty” so we can see it, too: “gray and white ribbons of it / on their way to evanescence.” These last two lines help us make sense of the idea that pollution is beautiful. The ribbons evaporating maybe *are* somehow beautiful. If we disconnect our knowledge from the image so we do not think about how the ribbons are smoke, if we simply see the visual the smoke makes: “ribbons...on their way to evanescence,” we experience what the speaker experiences: beauty. Or, perhaps, what the speaker sees as beautiful is the pollution disappearing. From this perspective, the speaker would see not the gray and white ribbons as beautiful, but the gray and white ribbons *disappearing* as beautiful.

Tonally, the words “perfect” and “struck” stand out for different reasons in the first two lines—one for meaning, one for sound. When something is “perfect” we feel admiration, maybe the need to protect it. Since nothing really is perfect, it also sounds a little romantic, subjective, or too good to be true, which may also produce tension as we know perfection isn’t real, or doesn’t last. The word “struck” is a harsh, violent, physical word. And ending the line on it emphasizes it even more. To be struck by something suggests shock, surprise, immediacy, and change.

In addition to these two words, the first phrase sets a tone, too, of expectation. We know something significant is being made of the planes because they are marking a day: “The day before those silver planes.” The event is important enough to refer to it in such a way. This is how we speak of big events. The day we were married. The day we went swimming. The day those silver planes came out of the blue.

The tone in the first stanza immediately produces a connection between the speaker and reader. We feel the speaker is disclosing something to us, or divulging something important. As we continue through the poem the speaker’s tone becomes inquisitive as he asks questions:

—or was it the coldness?—

that enemy,
can’t it have a place too?

Doesn’t a tear deserve a close-up?

Is he asking questions of the reader? To himself? A bit of both? We journey with him on his seeking.

Discussion

Exercise 5.1.3

Read through Dunn’s poem and identify the rest of the images. Discuss how each image makes you feel. To what words or images is your attention drawn? What associations do you make from them?

Find Connections and Ask Questions

After moving through the poem and noting images, their effects, and the tone or places where tone changes, the next question that is helpful to ask is: What does x remind me of? Or, what associations am I making? Usually the connections I would suggest making would be within the poem itself and the patterns it creates—between lines, images, repetitive words or themes, **diction** (word choice)—but in Dunn’s poem, before we can make connections within the poem, we are actually reminded of something outside of the poem. In the first stanza, the two planes near Newark and two ribbons evaporating may remind you of the iconic image of the September 11th attacks on The World Trade Center in New York City. This an **allusion** (an indirect reference) to that event, as suggested by the second stanza: “believers from another part of the world / must have seen what appeared to be gorgeous.” Making this connection provides us with a context for the poem’s occasion. Maybe we begin to ask, “How can the attacks on the World Trade Center and its subsequent collapse be seen as gorgeous?”

You may be wondering what happens if you didn't make that connection. Will you misread Dunn's poem? In a poem, allusions like this usually aren't usually necessary if the poem makes use of all the other elements of poetry successfully. And in Dunn's poem we are actually given enough, I would say, to have a sufficient experience if the allusion isn't made. In the poem the planes cause an "impact," believers elsewhere watch the "flames of something of theirs being born," the speaker watches "mesmerized," the media posts photographs of the fearful and "dead or made of stone" watching the events; then the poem focuses on the speaker's emotional reactions and thoughts regarding the event, and what thoughts it evokes within him in regard to beauty. The poem closes with the story of the fireman and his dog and the speaker's insights. Looking at it this way, maybe 9/11 is secondary in experiencing the poem. It's hard to be certain since I cannot *not* make the connection to the event personally, but perhaps it is possible that the allusion is not central to the poem's experience, since it is all of the other poetic techniques of the poem that create the sensual reaction in the reader.

Let's for a moment pretend that the poem isn't alluding to these events. This will leave us to focus on the private and unique universe of the poem and make connections within it. If we begin to make connections within the poem itself, one of the first connections we might make is how the ribbons in the first stanza appear beautiful to the speaker even though they are pollution, and how the flames in the second stanza appear "gorgeous" to the believers even though they are destructive. What does that suggest? The connection bridges the distance between the speaker and the believers, as they both have the capacity to see beauty in something harmful, in something that others see as ugly. This further suggests that beauty is subjective, though the ability to see it is universal.

You can see how making connections like this and asking questions about those connections can lead to insight into the poem's experience, as well as insight into the experience of being human. Here, Dunn's speaker has found similarities between himself and people who might be considered enemies. Beauty, we see, may be received and interpreted by our senses and not rely on context.

What other connections and patterns can we see? And what questions can these patterns raise in us? In the third stanza the speaker watches the collision "replayed"—be it on a television screen or in his mind—and admits to a desire for revenge. Later, in the last stanza, the speaker repeats the story of the fireman: "I repeated it / to everyone I knew." What does this suggest? He says "I did this for myself, / not for community or beauty's sake, / yet soon it had a rhythm and a frame." How are we to understand the impact of his repeating his story? If it is told "for myself," then what exactly is the speaker getting from this and how is it connected to the replaying of the collision? What might be meant by rhythm and frame?

In the fourth and fifth stanza the speaker makes a connection between himself admiring "the intensity" of the people in the photographs and between the photographers taking the photographs:

The next day there was a photograph
of dust and smoke ghosting a street,
and another of a man you couldn't be sure
was fear-frozen or dead or made of stone,

and for a while I was pleased
to admire the intensity—or was it the coldness?—
of each photographer's good eye.

The speaker asks, "Was it the coldness?" This seems to suggest a distance, or emotional coldness, in the voyeuristic qualities he is experiencing and the way photographers act as objective eyes for the audience. The photographers cannot act on their emotions or empathies, but instead to succeed, photographers in intense situations must shut down their responses and capture the moment visually, detached from their emotions. The speaker says that he admires this, "the intensity—or was it the coldness?— / of each photographer's good eye." Perhaps he sees courage in the act of taking these photographs, or maybe he sees something admirable in the way a person can detach himself from an event in order to focus only on the image, the visual, the camera's eye with a "good eye" that can see art and capture it.

In the fifth and sixth stanzas, the speaker muses on how he's reacted to beautiful things in the past just as coldly as these photographers: "For years I'd taken pride in resisting / the obvious—sunsets, snowy peaks, / a starlet's face." The pattern of "coldness" is established by several word choices here: "fear-frozen," "coldness," "snowy." The words are used as physical description and emotional description. They are literal, and they are figurative. Our speaker then tells us how he discovered that images of "sunsets, snowy peaks, / a starlet's face," too, have their "edgy" place. This is a little mysterious. Does "edgy" refer to the destructive, ugly yet mesmerizing collision and photographs he's been viewing? Is this suggesting that serene beauty and edginess are somehow closely related?

The speaker then introduces the idea of “the sentimental,” which he refers to as “beauty’s sloppy cousin, the enemy,” and asks if it can have a place to also be appreciated. The word choice of “enemy” is interesting, as it echoes the relationship between the speaker and the believers from the beginning of the poem. What does this suggest about the relationship between enemies, and between the roles they play? The speaker ends the stanza with another question: “Doesn’t a tear deserve a close-up?” The image represents sentimentality, beauty’s “sloppy cousin,” but it actually could be another allusion, this time to a commercial by the Keep America Beautiful campaign, made in the 1970s at the start of the environmental movement. It is another reference that will not diminish the poem’s effect on a reader if he or she doesn’t know it, but it can add another layer of complexity if it is understood. In [the commercial](#), a Native American witnesses the pollution of a river as he paddles a canoe up the river, and as he turns to the camera, we zoom in on a tear slipping from his eye. The allusion echoes the pollution that the speaker found beautiful in the first stanza.

In the last part of the poem, the speaker confesses that he retells the story about the fireman hiding in the rubble “so his dispirited search dog / could have someone to find.” And that he retells it not “for community or beauty’s sake,” but for himself. Why would he do that? Why does it matter that he does? The story is moving. Who isn’t moved by the relationship between a man and his dog? Our focus shifts from all of the people who perished in the rubble whom the fireman and his dog cannot help, to the “dispirited” feelings of the dog that the fireman tries to help. It is almost as if all the devastating emotion we feel thinking about those people and their families, empathizing with them, transfers to the emotion we feel thinking about the dog, empathizing with the fireman who feels such empathy and emotion for the dog that he hides in the rubble so the dog can find someone. In this moment, the feelings the dog has become as important and as worthy as our own—a dog’s emotions equate with a human’s. If we can feel such strong empathy toward the dog, as the fireman clearly does, can we not also feel it toward our enemies? And are these feelings in any way similar to “revenge’s sweet surge,” referred to earlier in the poem? Are they maybe one side and the other, sloppy cousins of each other like beauty and sentimentality? Or is the dog and fireman story too sentimental to fall in love with? And if it is, doesn’t it “deserve a close-up” too?

Look Closely at Diction



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Alt Text: Gold frame

When reading a poem, you should always look up words you do not know, but sometimes it can help to look up words that you do know when they have more than one meaning, too. The last line of the poem may seem a bit mysterious: “I did this for myself, / not for community or beauty’s sake, / yet soon it had a rhythm and a frame.” A rhythm and a frame? What on earth does that have to do with anything? Is the speaker suggesting that beauty relies somehow on rhythm and a frame? We can begin by looking in the poem for other things that have rhythm and a frame. The poem itself, does, for starters. Poetry has rhythm. Speech has rhythm. And the images of the building collapsing repetitively have a rhythm too, as well as a frame if they are being shown on television, captured through a camera lens. But “frame” is a word with many meanings. If we look at the word “frame,” we find that it is a noun defined as:

Example 5.1.3

1. a border or case for enclosing a picture, mirror, etc.
2. a rigid structure formed of relatively slender pieces, joined so as to surround sizable empty spaces or nonstructural panels, and generally used as a major support in building or engineering works, machinery, furniture, etc.
3. a body, especially a human body, with reference to its size or build; physique: *He has a large frame.*
4. a structure for admitting or enclosing something: *a window frame.*
5. usually, frames. (*used with a plural verb*) the framework for a pair of eyeglasses.
6. form, constitution, or structure in general; system; order.
7. a particular state, as of the mind: *an unhappy frame of mind.*

In looking at the above definitions, there are several that have resonance in relation to this poem.

1. a border or case for enclosing a picture, mirror, etc.
 - We frame art and other works of beauty, and the title of the poem is “The Insistence of Beauty.” What is the purpose of a frame in this sense of the word?
2. a rigid structure formed of relatively slender pieces, joined so as to surround sizable empty spaces or nonstructural panels, and generally used as a major support in building or engineering works, machinery, furniture, etc.
 - The World Trade Center, like all buildings, had a frame, which was destroyed in the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Were the Twin Towers a piece of art that had beauty and a frame? What did they represent symbolically?
3. a body, especially a human body, with reference to its size or build; physique
 - All people—no matter what their culture or nationality—and other living beings have frames.
4. form, constitution, or structure in general; system; order
 1. Poems have form; society has systems; the United States has a Constitution; the 9/11 terrorist attacks were very orderly and systematic. How is beauty linked to order?
5. a particular state, as of the mind
 - A poem’s speaker has a state of mind, as does the reader; the events of 9/11 place us in a certain “frame of mind.” What frame of mind is the reader in? What frame of mind does the poem put the reader in?

The word “frame” adds layers of meaning that can contribute to our interpretations, reactions, and understandings of this poem, as the word relates to many of the poem’s themes: beauty, violence, love, destruction, storytelling, the visual nature of art, to name a few. Considering these definitions, we might follow our thoughts to conclude something like this:

“Frame” can refer to the building’s architecture, the human body, systems, and orders. We frame photographs—a single moment captured from time—and hang them on our walls. A frame lends support, gives something its shape. And rhythm? Our first rhythm: our mother’s heartbeat—rhythm is elemental and basic. It is the basis of music and poetry. The human body finds rhythms pleasing. Rhythms repeat themselves. The man telling the story of the fireman and his dog creates a rhythm through its repetition; it becomes artful, monumental. It becomes an experience shared rather than isolated. It stands as a symbol, an allegory for the wreckage of person, animal, and city. Perhaps the retelling becomes its own type of architecture that listeners can enter, or the bones within someone, like the fireman, who in retelling this story finds strength and support.

Discussion

Exercise 5.1.4

What is your experience of this poem? How do you interpret its meaning? After discussing your reactions to the poem, discuss the specific approaches you used to come to your interpretation. What do you think is the most powerful part of the poem? What, if anything, confused you in its reading? Did that change once you conducted a closer reading of the poem? Did your interpretation align with mine in some places? Or are there sections in which it differed? Remember, there is no one way to interpret a poem. That’s what makes discussing them so pleasing and rewarding.

Writers Choices

We have learned to read a poem very closely. As part of our reading, we need to be asking why the writer made the choices they

made. Why did they chose that word? Why did they chose to rhyme or not. Does a certain formatting work better than another to tell the poem? Blank verse or Sonnet? As a writer, you have many choices available to you. Keep them in mind as you start to write. Always read a poem with a writer's eye so that you can learn what works, why, and how you might do it better.

²⁶ *"The Insistence of Beauty", from THE INSISTENCE OF BEAUTY: POEMS by Stephen Dunn. Copyright © 2004 by Stephen Dunn. Used by permission of W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.*

Answers

Exercise 5.1.1

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- [2: Welcome, Reader: Reading Poetry](#) by Michelle Bonczek Evory is licensed [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#).

5.2: William Carlos Williams (1883 - 1963)



Image 5.3 | William Carlos Williams, 1921

Photographer | Unknown

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Affectionately known as “the good doctor,” the prolific William Carlos Williams published dozens of works of literature in his lifetime, including novels, plays, essay and poetry collections, an autobiography, and one of the longest modernist poems ever composed, the five-part epic *Paterson*. Born in Rutherford, New Jersey, in 1883, Williams attended medical school at the University of Pennsylvania, where he met fellow poets Hilda Doolittle (H. D.) and Ezra Pound. Soon after graduating, Williams settled back home in Rutherford with his wife and family to run a medical practice, delivering over 2000 babies during his lifelong career as a pediatrician. While establishing himself as a successful neighborhood doctor, Williams also established himself as an influential voice in New York City’s Modernist art scene, befriending writers such as Wallace Stevens and Marianne Moore and experimental painters such as Marcel Duchamp. In 1913, the International Exhibition of Modern Art at New York City’s 69th Regiment Armory introduced Americans to radical new styles of painting such as **Cubism** and **Fauvism**. Inspired by these new forms of visual art, Williams sought to craft a similarly new form of poetry for modern America. Like the modern painters, Williams focuses on the details of urban life through shifting perspectives and juxtaposed images. To both free his poetry from the restrictions of traditional verse forms and save it from the anarchy of free verse, Williams devised a new poetic rhythm called “the variable foot” that he used to structure his poems organically according to the rhythms of everyday American speech.

At a time when many American modernist authors were moving to Europe to find artistic inspiration, Williams found inspiration in his native New Jersey, taking its small cities and working people as the subjects for his poetry. Stylistically, Williams’s poetry is rooted in the **Imagism** championed by his friend Ezra Pound, as evidenced by the short imagist poem, “The Red Wheelbarrow” presented here. In his *Autobiography*, Williams writes that the poet is “not to talk in vague categories but to write particularly, as a physician works, upon a patient, upon the thing before him, in the particular to discover the universal.” Williams’s insistence on writing about the particular led him to differ from poets such as Pound and Eliot, who eventually sought to make modern poetry more universal by making it more international, infusing it with different cultures and languages. Williams chose instead to write most of his poems to use the title of one of his essay collections “in the American grain,” finding the universal in the everyday experiences of his native land. For example, in “The Dead Baby,” Williams draws from his own experience as a doctor to explore a sadly common but usually unsung moment of grief. In “This Is Just To Say,” Williams combines the linguistic economy of an Imagist poet with the shifts in perspective of a Cubist painter, presenting multiple perspectives on a small family drama over the course of three brief stanzas.

“The Red Wheelbarrow”

Please click the link below to access this selection:

[Red Wheelbarrow \[www.poetryfoundation.org\]](http://www.poetryfoundation.org)

“This Is Just To say”

Please click the link below to access this selection:

[This is Just to Say](http://www.poetryfoundation.org) [www.poetryfoundation.org]

“The Dead Baby”

Please click the link below to access this selection:

[The Dead Baby](http://www.poetrynook.com) [www.poetrynook.com]

Reading and Review Questions

1. In his poem *Paterson*, Williams famously writes that there are “no ideas but in things.” What ideas do you find in “The Red Wheelbarrow”?
2. Discuss the use of repetition in “The Dead Baby.” What universal meanings can be derived by Williams’s careful observation of the particular repetitive behavior in this poem?
3. Explore the shifting perspectives in “This Is Just to Say.” How does the idea of the plums change over the poem’s course?

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5.3: Emily Dickinson (1830 - 1886)

Born into an influential and socially prominent New England family in 1830, Emily Dickinson benefited from a level of education and mobility that most of her contemporaries, female and male, could not comprehend. The middle child of Edward Dickinson and Emily Norcross, Dickinson, along with her older brother Austin and younger sister Lavinia, received both an extensive formal education and the informal education that came by way of countless visitors to the family homestead during Edward Dickinson's political career. Contrary to popular depictions of her life, Dickinson did travel outside of Amherst but ultimately chose to remain at home in the close company of family and friends. An intensely private person, Dickinson exerted almost singular control over the distribution of her poetry during her lifetime. That control, coupled with early portrayals of her as reclusive, has led many readers to assume that Dickinson was a fragile and timid figure whose formal, mysterious, concise, and clever poetry revealed the mind of a writer trapped in the rigid gender confines of the nineteenth century. More recent scholarship demonstrates not only the fallacy of Dickinson's depiction as the ghostly "Belle of Amherst," but also reveals the technical complexity of her poetry that predates the Modernism of T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, and Marianne Moore by almost three-quarters of a century. In the selections that follow, Dickinson's poetry displays both her technical proficiency and her embrace of techniques that were new to the nineteenth century. Like her contemporary Walt Whitman, Dickinson used poetry to show her readers familiar landscapes from a fresh perspective.



Image 1.2 | Emily Dickinson, 1848

Photographer | Unknown

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The selections that follow, from Dickinson's most prolific years (1861-1865), illustrate the poet's mastery of the **lyric** a short poem that often expresses a single theme such as the speaker's mood or feeling. "I taste a liquor never brewed-", our first selection, celebrates the poet's relationship to the natural world in both its wordplay (note the use of liquor in line one to indicate both an alcoholic beverage in the first stanza and a rich nectar in the third) and its natural **imagery**. Here, as in many of her poems, Dickinson's vibrant language demonstrates a vital spark in contrast to her reclusive image. Our second selection, "The Soul selects her own Society -," shows Dickinson using well-known images of power and authority to celebrate the independence of the soul in the face of expectations. In both of these first two poems, readers will note the celebrations of the individual will that engages fully with life without becoming either intoxicated or enslaved. The third selection, "Because I could not stop for Death -," one of the most famous poems in the Dickinson canon, forms an important bookend to our second selection in that both poems show Dickinson's precise control over the speaker's relationship to not only the natural world but also the divine. While death cannot be avoided, neither is it to be feared; the speaker of this poem reminds readers that the omnipresence of death does not mean that death is immanent. This idea of death as always present and potential comes full circle in the final selection in this unit, "My Life had stood - a Loaded Gun -." Here Dickinson plays with our preconceptions not only of death, but also of energy which appears always to be waiting for someone to unleash it. Considered carefully, these four poems demonstrate the range of Dickinson's reach as a poet. In these lyrics, mortality and desire combine in precise lyrics that awaken both our imagination and our awareness of the natural world.

“I Taste a Liquor Never Brewed”

I taste a liquor never brewed,
From tankards scooped in pearl;
Not all the vats upon the Rhine
Yield such an alcohol!

Inebriate of air am I,
And debauchee of dew,
Reeling, through endless summer days,
From inns of molten blue.

When landlords turn the drunken bee
Out of the foxglove's door,
When butterflies renounce their drams,
I shall but drink the more!

Till seraphs swing their snowy hats,
And saints to windows run,
To see the little tippler
Leaning against the sun!

“The Soul Selects Her Own Society”

The soul selects her own society,
Then shuts the door;
On her divine majority
Obtrude no more.

Unmoved, she notes the chariot's pausing
At her low gate;
Unmoved, an emperor is kneeling
Upon her mat.

I've known her from an ample nation
Choose one;
Then close the valves of her attention
Like stone.

“Because I Could Not Stop For Death”

Because I could not stop for Death,
He kindly stopped for me;
The carriage held but just ourselves
And Immortality.

We slowly drove, he knew no haste,
And I had put away
My labor, and my leisure too,
For his civility.

We passed the school where children played,
Their lessons scarcely done;
We passed the fields of gazing grain,
We passed the setting sun.

“My Life Had Stood a Loaded Gun”

My Life had stood a Loaded Gun In Corners till a Day
The Owner passed identified And carried Me away

And now We roam in Sovereign Woods And now We hunt the Doe
And every time I speak for Him The Mountains straight reply

And do I smile, such cordial light
Upon the Valley glow It is as a Vesuvian face
Had let its pleasure through

And when at Night Our good Day done I guard My Master's Head
'Tis better than the Eider-Duck's
Deep Pillow to have shared

To foe of His I'm deadly foe None stir the second time
On whom I lay a Yellow Eye Or an emphatic Thumb

Though I than He may longer live
He longer must than I
For I have but the power to kill, Without the power to die

Reading and Review Questions

1. Many of Dickinson's poems are rhythmically similar to popular nineteenth-century songs. How do those similarities help us to understand Dickinson's poetry?
2. Death and isolation are common themes in Dickinson's poetry, yet her poems rarely seem melancholy. What elements prevent her poems from becoming too solemn?
3. How do Dickinson's poems support or challenge what we think we know about gender roles in the nineteenth century?
4. Compare and contrast Dickinson's isolation with Whitman's aggressively public persona.

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5.4: e.e. cummings (1894 - 1962)



Image 5.8 | e. e. cummings, 1953

Photographer | Walter Albertin

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Like a number of the modernist poets, e. e. cummings came from a family of teachers and ministers. But while many of his contemporaries were active members of the artistic communities of New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, cummings was a more solitary figure whose poetry and politics tended toward the everyday and the common. This is not to say that cummings was a passive observer of the world around him: while serving overseas during World War I, cummings and a friend were held by the French on charges that their letters home were derisive of authority and of the general war effort. At home in New York, however, cummings seems to have avoided the style of poetry and pronouncements that made his contemporaries like Pound, Williams, Moore, and Stevens into vanguards of Modernist poetry.

Nonetheless, contemporary readers are often startled by the appearance of cummings's poetry on the printed page. Eschewing capitalization, punctuation, and standard verse forms, cummings's works take full advantage of the printed page to present poems that are often better suited to private reading than public performance. Where the lack of punctuation and capitalization may disarm readers more accustomed to being told how to vocalize a poem, cummings's verses are presented without a beginning or an ending so as to allow the reader to move through a collection of cummings's verse in a way that befits the private reading experience. Like Marianne Moore, who also paid careful attention to the presentation of her works in print, cummings embraced the opportunities that modern print culture provided to poets.

The selection from cummings in this unit, "in Just-," published in 1920, demonstrates many of the attributes that are common in cummings's verse. This poem can be said to begin without a beginning, withholding even the suggestion of where these lines fall in the consciousness of the poetic voice. And yet, while cummings does away with many aspects of poetry, the beginning of the poem is still familiar to the reader. Consider the beginning of the poem written out in prose: in Justspring when the world is mud-luscious the little lame balloonman whistles far and wee. Written out this way, the reader can quickly ascertain the meaning of the first few lines, but it is not the form on the page, verse or prose, that makes this possible, but the fact that these lines follow an elementary syntax that feels natural to the ear, even if the eye is confused by the physical arrangement.

Once the first lines of the poem have been mastered, more traditional patterns begin to emerge for the reader. The three-times repetition of the words, "balloonman whistles far and wee," divides the poem into two sections describing the games and adventures of two groups of children, Eddie and Bill and Betty and Isbel. With these children, celebrating the early days of spring, the Just-spring of the opening lines are full of movement and energy in contrast to the infirmities of the balloonman; nonetheless, all five are part of a vignette whose appearance in the poem suggests further adventures to come. Although unusual in its shape and punctuation, cummings's poetry is linked to the same rhythms of life that have captivated poets from Chaucer to Eliot.

"in Just-"

in Justspring
when the world is mud-

luscious the little
lame balloonman
whistles far and wee
and eddieandbill come
running from marbles and
piracies and it's spring
when the world is puddle-wonderful
the queer
old balloonman whistles
far and wee
and bettyandisbel come dancing
from hop-scotch and jump-rope and
it's spring and
the goat-footed
balloonMan whistles
far and wee

Reading and Review Questions

1. How does cummings's resistance to punctuation shape your understanding of this poem? Can you determine an internal structure in the poem that replaces the need for standard punctuation?
2. How does cummings's poetry compare to other iconic American poets like Whitman or Williams? Is cummings's rejection of punctuation and traditional forms part of the American quality of his poetry?
3. Analyze the ways in which cummings uses hyphenation and line breaks in "in Just-" to create a sense of overlapping time.

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5.5: Langston Hughes (1902 - 1967)



Image 5.18 | Langston Hughes, 1936

Photographer | Carl Van Vechten

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“We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame,” Langston Hughes writes in his 1926 manifesto for the younger generation of Harlem Renaissance artists, “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain.” He continues, “If white people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, it doesn’t matter. We know we are beautiful.” Celebrated as “the poet laureate of Harlem,” Langston Hughes was born in Joplin, Missouri, and traveled extensively before settling in the neighborhood he came to call home. When growing up, Hughes lived variously with his grandmother in Lawrence, Kansas, his father in Mexico, and his mother in Washington, D.C. After just one year at Columbia University, Hughes left college to explore the world, working as a cabin boy on ships bound for Africa and as a cook in a Paris kitchen. Throughout these early years, Hughes published poems in the African-American magazines *The Crisis* and *Opportunity*; these poems soon earned him recognition as a rising star of the Harlem Renaissance who excelled at the lyrical use of the music, speech, and experiences of urban, working-class African-Americans. Hughes published his first book of poetry, *The Weary Blues*, at the age of twenty-four while still a student at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. Over the course of his long and influential literary career, Hughes worked extensively in all areas of African-American literature, writing novels, short stories, plays, essays, and works of history; translating work by black authors; and editing numerous anthologies of African-American history and culture, such as *The First Book of Jazz* (1955) and *The Best Short Stories by Negro Writers* (1969).

Hughes’s poems embody one of the major projects of the Harlem Renaissance: to create distinctively African-American art. By the turn of the twentieth century, African-Americans had awakened to the realization that two hundred years of slavery had simultaneously erased their connections to their African heritage and created, in its wake, new, vital forms of distinctively African-American culture. Accordingly, politicians, authors, and artists associated with the Harlem Renaissance reconstructed that lost history and championed art rooted in the black American experience. Hughes’s poems from the 1920s are particularly notable for celebrating black culture while also honestly representing the deprivations of working-class African-American life. In “The Negro Speaks of Rivers,” Hughes connects African-American culture to the birth of civilization in Africa and the Middle East. In “Mother to Son,” Hughes draws upon the music of the blues and black dialect to celebrate the indomitable heart of working black America. Hughes grew increasingly radicalized in the 1930s following such high-profile examples of American racism as the 1931 Scottsboro trial in Alabama. He travelled to the Soviet Union in 1932 to work on an unfinished film about race in the American South and published in leftist publications associated with the **American Communist Party**, the only political party at the time to oppose segregation. “Christ in Alabama” is a good example of Hughes’s more pointed political style, in which the poet criticizes the immorality of racism by equating the suffering of African-Americans in Alabama with the suffering of Christ. Poems such as “I, too,” and “Theme for English B,” in turn, combine Hughes’s provocative politics with his cultural lyricism to articulate a theme that runs throughout his life’s work: that the American experience is as black as it is white.

“Christ in Alabama”

Please click the link below to access this selection:

xroads.virginia.edu/~ma05/dul...s/hughes2.html

“The Negro Speaks of Rivers”

I've known rivers

I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow of human blood in human veins.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.

I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.

I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.

I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln went down to New Orleans, and I've seen its muddy bosom turn all golden in the sunset.

I've known rivers:

Ancient, dusky rivers.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

“Theme for English B”

Please click the link below to access this selection:

www.eecs.harvard.edu/~keith/p...English_B.html

Reading and Review Questions

1. What is significant about the rivers the Euphrates, the Congo, the Nile, and the Mississippi that Hughes names in “The Negro Speaks of Rivers”?
2. Jesus Christ is often represented as being white in Western art. What does Hughes's identification of Christ as “a nigger” say about the Christians of the segregated American South of the early twentieth century?
3. The semi-autobiographical poem “Theme for English B” was first published in 1946, decades after Hughes attended his one year of college at Columbia “on the hill above Harlem.” However, Hughes writes the poem not in the past tense but in the present tense. How does Hughes's use of the present tense affect the meaning of the poem?

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5.6: Poetry Exercises

Let's practice writing our own poems now.

Here are some suggestions for inspiration

Exercise 5.6.1

1. Write about your day
2. Personify your car
3. immortalize your pet
4. Love letter
5. Note to your baby

Example 5.6.1

Dance of the 405

Famous for Fury.

Famous for fast pace.

Highway flyers dance

between the lanes

in a precise choreography of

speed and grace,

trying to get from place to place.

Drivers in such haste;

with no time to waste;

chase each other's tails

a string of red

lights up the place.

Hoping to be safe,

executing the dance

of time and space.

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6: DRAMA

A tidbit of history about drama:²⁷

Drama is the specific mode of fiction represented in performance. The term comes from a Greek word meaning "action," which is derived from "to do." The two masks associated with drama represent the traditional generic division between comedy and tragedy.

We will view drama and the composition of plays the way others use a traditional approach to theatre which is rooted in character and narrative structure, with emphasis on a play's arc through its beginning, turning point, and ending. There is overlap, then, between composing fiction and creating a play.

6.1: Drama

6.2: Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906)

6.2.1: A Doll's House

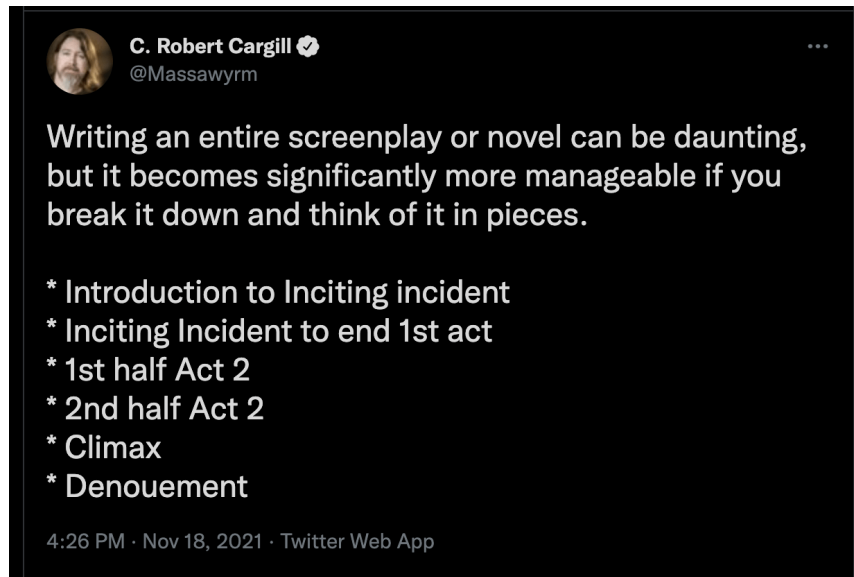
6.2.2: An Enemy of the People

6.3: Drama Exercises

²⁷Wikipedia contributors. "Drama." Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 24 Dec. 2016. Web. 24 Dec. 2016. Text is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License.

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6.1: Drama



28

In a three-act play²⁹, each act usually has a different tone to it. The most commonly used, but not always, is the first act having a lot of introductory elements, the second act can usually be the darkest with the antagonists having a greater encompass, while the third act is the resolution and the protagonists prevailing. There is an age-old saying that "the second act is the best" because it was in between a starting and ending act and thus being able to delve deeper into more of the meat of the story since it does not need to have as prominent introductory or resolute portions. Of course, this is not always so, since a third act or even a first act can have the common second act characteristics, but that type of structure is the most used.

Example 6.1.1

Act 1: Introduction to conflict and characters.

Act 2: The obstacle or complication arises!

Act 3: The resolution.

*The number of scenes varies.

Typical Screenplay Format:³⁰

Although some writers utilize their own modifications on the standard screenplay format, there is a basis upon which all feature film screenplays are formatted.

The standard screenplay format is devised for simplicity of reading by many different departments in addition to roughly timing out to one minute of screen time for one page of script.

Screenplays should be written in **twelve-point Courier font**. Twelve-point Courier is an important component of the standard format for two reasons. One is nostalgic (Courier font resembles the look of a page written on a mechanical typewriter), but the other reason is highly practical: Courier is a monospaced font meaning every glyph is the same width (as opposed to variable-width fonts, where the "w" and "m" are wider than most letters, and the "i" is narrower). With a monospaced font only a certain number of letters will fit on each row and each page, assuring uniformity of the format and achieving the one page per minute of screen time formula.

Margins are generally set as such (spaces are assuming 12-point font at 72 spaces per line):

- Scene Number (if used) is 1.25 inches from the left edge or 13 "spaces" in
- Scene Heading 1.75 inches from the left edge or 19 spaces in
- Action 1.75 inches from the left edge or 19 spaces in (cut off at 55 characters (including spaces) per line)
- Dialogue 2.75 inches from the left edge or 29 spaces in (cut off at 35 characters (including spaces) per line)
- Character name is centered on the page (about 43 spaces in)
- Parenthetical direction is 3.5 inches from the left or 36 spaces in (cut off at 16 characters (including spaces) per line)



"Linda, Mark and Gwilym close Screenplay 2011" by Shetland Arts is licensed under [CC BY-ND 2.0](#).

Alt Text: Three people sitting on stage talking about screenplay

Elements of the Screenplay

Screenplays traditionally start with FADE IN in the upper left-hand corner of the first page, immediately followed by the scene heading for the first location.

SCENE HEADING (SLUG)

A scene heading always starts with a distinction whether the location of the scene is indoors or outdoors. INT. signifies an interior location whereas EXT. signifies an exterior location. These are always abbreviated and followed by a period and one blank space and then the name of the location where that scene takes place. Scene headings, also called slugs, are placed for each and every location in the screenplay, including all the various elements of a location. For example: INT. OLD HOUSE LIVING ROOM might be followed by INT. OLD HOUSE KITCHEN if the characters or action moves to the kitchen. It is not correct to have INT. OLD HOUSE and move characters from one room to the next within the same scene. Each room is treated as a separate location in the script because when the film is actually shot these sequences will most likely be shot out of order (all scenes in the kitchen will be shot together and all scenes in the living room will be shot together, possibly on different days) and, possibly, in completely different physical locations (the kitchen may be a practical location in an Old House, the living room might be built on a soundstage). Some writers like to put a hyphen between the main location and the sub location, IE: INT. OLD HOUSE - LIVING ROOM and INT. OLD HOUSE - KITCHEN, but this is not required. Following the location name is one or two hyphens (depending on writer's taste) and the time of day the scene takes place; DAY, NIGHT, DAWN, DUSK, EVENING or MOMENTS LATER, CONTINUOUS (if the scene is immediately after the following as in the characters walking from the living room to the kitchen in one conversation). After the Scene heading, there are two carriage returns (one blank space) and the ACTION begins. Scene headings are always in all capital letters.

ACTION

Action is the description of what is happening in the scene, IE: Mark walks into the living room from the kitchen and picks up his books. Action is always written in present tense (Mark walks, not Mark walked). Action is in non-indented paragraph/prose form and is the longest element on the page (spanning from the far left to the far-right hand margins of the page). It is generally accepted that action should not be longer than 10 lines without a break. Action also describes the locations, as much as necessary. Action is always in traditional English upper/lowercase. There are two-line breaks between the end of action and the name of a character speaking (one blank line between action and character name) or the beginning of a new scene (one blank line between the end of action and the scene heading for the next scene).

CHARACTER NAME

When dialogue is spoken, it is preceded by the name of the character speaking the dialogue. The Character Name is placed on its own line and centered on the page. It is always in capital letters. There are some modifiers that can be placed after the character name in parenthesis (separated by a single space). Voice Over (V.O.) IE: JOHN (V.O.) is dialogue that is presented on the film's audio track but is not spoken by the character on screen. Voice Over can be a voice on a telephone or the sound of the character's own thoughts. Off Screen (O.S.) IE: JOHN (O.S.) is dialogue that is spoken by a character in or immediately near the physical location of the scene, but who is not visible on the screen in that shot or scene. This could be a character speaking from another room. There is only one-line break after the character name before dialogue (no blank space).

DIALOGUE

Dialogue is the actual spoken words by the character. It is placed immediately under the centered character's name and indented considerably from the left-hand side and slightly from the right to stand out on the page. Dialogue is presented in standard upper/lowercase text (ALL CAPS can signify extreme emphasis or SHOUTING). Underline and italics can be used for emphasis but should be used sparingly.

PARENTHETICAL DIRECTION

This is very brief (usually one or two words) of direction or clarification that is placed within a character's spoken dialogue. It is placed, indented from the dialogue, on a separate line and enclosed in parenthesis. Parenthetical direction is only specific to the speaking character (not to other characters in the scene) and should be extremely brief. It can indicate a change in direction of conversation to a different character in the scene, a notation on a specific emotion or intent in the following dialogue. Parentheticals are always in the middle of dialogue - dialogue never ends with a parenthetical direction. Parenthetical direction is usually written in all lowercase letters IE: (beat). After the dialogue ends, there are two-line breaks (one blank space) between the next character name or action or a new scene heading.

Some standard format notes:

- The first time a character is introduced in action, their name is presented in ALL CAPITAL LETTERS to point out their introduction.
- Sound effects such as a phone RINGS or an alarm BEEPS are placed in all capital letters to point them out.
- Scene transitions such as DISSOLVE TO:, CUT TO:, FADE TO BLACK: are placed flush right, on their own line. They are placed at the end of a scene with one blank space before a new scene heading. Generally speaking, they should be used sparingly.

Possible Template:

FADE IN:

INT. BASIC HOTEL SEMINAR ROOM - DAY

JOE and ANN burst through the doors into a clean, well-lit seminar room.

JOE

Are we in time?

ANN

How could they start without us?

We're the presenters!

Joe catches his breath as he leans against the table at the front of the room.

JOE

(looking about the room)

We are?

ANN

Don't be an idiot. You know we've been invited to discuss love and life.

JOE

So why is the room empty?

Ann and Joe both look out across the room -- rows of empty chairs and not a person in sight.

ANN

Hey, hey, hey, don't worry!

She takes a deep breath. Then she looks at the clock on the wall and smiles.

ANN

(continuing)

We're an hour early. We should practice.

JOE

Okay, you start.

JOE

Okay, you start.

A Student Example of an Unformatted Screenplay:

Example 6.1.1

he Breaking News Newscast³¹

Anchor: We now interrupt this broadcast of 2-hour elevator music with breaking news, we have just discovered that our towns top potato fryer has gotten his head stuck in a barrel of gasoline, and well hand it off to Mike on the scene. Tell us what's happening Mike.

Mike: Well, it seems that according to the witnesses, Howard here was at the 24-hour McDonalds fryin up his best Idahos when all disaster broke lose when he had just remembered he had forgotten to tie his shoelaces and slipped into the fryer which thankfully had been turned off just earlier that day.

Anchor: Well, if the fryer was turned off how did fry them potatoes?

Mike: Well, that's simple Anchor, he didn't. Right after he floated to safety an angry FBI agent drove right through the wall causing Howard fly in the air and land right back into the fryer.

Anchor: That still doesn't explain how he got his head stuck in that gasoline barrel.

Mike: Well, after the agent wrung the oil out of Howard he realized he had compromised the classified oil barrels in his van and then they broke lose of the van and started rolling everywhere. One of them caught up to Howard and he fell face first into the barrel. Thankfully all the other barrels left the 24-hour McDonalds.

Anchor: Thank you Mike, we are now receiving word of classified oil barrel attacks all over our quiet town of Iowa as the law enforcement are warning everyone to stay inside. We still have yet to know of how we can kill the beasts or if we have any chance of defeating them at all. In other news the fire department is hosting a big match and lighter festival complete with a picnic and booze.

Screen cuts to black

Anchor: Breaking News as the town of Iowa is in chaos after the classified oil barrels invaded the Lighter and Matches festival lighting them and anything else in their way on fire. Officials and the Fire department are baffled to how this could have happened. We turn to Mike who is on the scene.

Mike: Everyone is running and screaming as the classified gasoline barrels are charging at anything they see.

Anchor: I wasn't aware that the barrels could see Mike.

Mike: Well, they can Anchor, we have that all the barrels are wearing multiple goggles that gives them the ability to see, I'm uh not sure how we didn't notice that before.

Anchor: Yeah, that's a pretty big oversight buddy.

Mike: Yeah....

Anchor: Well in other news a new flight school has opened up in Iowa and people are pretty excited about it.

The screen fades to black.

Anchor: Breaking News as there is no where to hide now the classified oil barrels have learned how to fly. The officials place the blame on the flying school that taught these barrels how to fly we now go to the scene to the instructor himself. Sir why would you ever teach these monsters after they have caused so much destruction?

Instructor: Well at first I wanted to teach them because they held me up at gun point but...

Anchor: Wait your saying that the oil barrels held you up at gunpoint?

Instructor: Yeah, so?

Anchor: You're saying that BARRELS held you up at gunpoint?

Instructor: Yes..

Anchor: Alright..

Long paused silence

Instructor: Anyway, after that happened I thought who am I to discriminate against learning, just because they're barrels doesn't mean they can't learn how to fly. So, I started at the basics and we trained for a whole 24-hours until they were ready. And when they took off I realized **(starts to tear up)** I had never seen anything more majestic and off they went into the sunset... **(breaks down into sobbing)**

Anchor: That was beautiful.... **(breaks down into sobbing with the Instructor)**

The scene fades to black.

Anchor: Breaking news as we have now gotten word on the whereabouts of the FBI agent that started this whole mess. We now go to the scene to Mike, who we have now found out is the FBI agent. Mike why did you do this.

Mike: Well Anchor I was fed up with life that day and well when I got those unfried fried potatoes I just lost it. I didn't know what I was doing and before I knew it I was wringing the oil out of Howard. The poor man didn't know what he had done but it was too late.

Anchor: That's a little lesson for you kids out there to always tie your shoelaces or else you'll destroy your town with classified gasoline barrels and teach them how to fly.

Mike: That sure is a valuable lesson Anchor.

Anchor: It sure is...

Awkward silence

Anchor: But seriously Mike, why create classified oil barrels in the first place.

Mike: You mean classified gasoline barrels.

Anchor: That's what I said.

Mike: Oh **(pause)** well that's classified Anchor.

Anchor: Come on Mike, we've all been wondering where these things came from.

Mike: Sorry Anchor it's classified.

Anchor: Come on Mike!

Mike: No!

Anchor: Please!

Mike: No, Anchor!

Anchor: I'll be forced to blackmail you!

Mike: I'll be forced to silence you!

Anchor: Come on!

Mike: No

Anchor: Come on!

Mike: No

Anchor: Come on!

Mike: No Anchor!

Anchor: Come on please!

Mike:

The screen fades to black.

Sports with Bob: Breaking news as the disappearance of Anchor Smith has swept the newsroom with panic as I am now the Anchor. In other news, Howard has finally been freed from the classified oil barrel and the law has been passed in town hall that no one can discriminate against anyone who wants to learn how to fly. The flight instructor has now been appointed mayor since I guess we didn't have one before. This is Sports with Bob, now onto Sports...

Scene fades to black.

This is the end of the show.

In this chapter we have learned the different ways we can write a play. Now it's your turn to write a drama!

²⁸FYI, from an online dictionary, denouement means: "the final part of a play, movie, or narrative in which the strands of the plot are drawn together, and matters are explained or resolved." This may have been obvious from context, but hey, why not share the definition?!

²⁹Wikipedia contributors. "Act (drama)." Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 21 Sep. 2016. Web. 21 Sep. 2016. Text is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License.

³⁰"Movie Making Manual/Writing/Screenplay Format." *Wikibooks, The Free Textbook Project*. 1 Dec 2017, 04:35 UTC. 22 Jun 2019, 13:18 <https://en.wikibooks.org/w/index.php?title=Movie_Making_Manual/Writing/Screenplay_Format&oldid=3336745>.

³¹This piece of drama by Phoenix Black is licensed CC-BY-NC-SA; it was created for NDSCS English 211 in the Spring of 2021.

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6.2: Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906)

Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) A Doll's House Norwegian Realism Henrik Ibsen is called both "the father of Realism" and "the father of modern theater" in Europe, which is to say that he was the first playwright to use Realism on stage. Ibsen's impact on theater makes him the most influential European playwright since Shakespeare. For Ibsen, art should be both challenging and a force for social change; his plays often expose what he saw as the moral hypocrisy of society. In particular, Ibsen's plays peel back the veneer of respectability of the Norwegian middle class, revealing what happens when people only pretend to be moral. No group or ideology was safe from his criticism, and often there are no characters in a play who are completely without blame. For example, in *An Enemy of the People* (1882), the outright villains may be the businessmen who are poisoning the local water source, but the locals are equally at fault for refusing to believe the truth for selfish reasons, and the supposed hero of the story makes matters worse with his stubborn temper. In *Ghosts* (1881), Ibsen broke several taboos in his depiction of how a husband's repeated infidelities lead to passing on syphilis to his unborn son. As guilty as the husband was, everyone from the pastor to the wife bear some responsibility for looking the other way, even after the husband's death. Ibsen's goals for *A Doll's House* (1879) are every bit as broad as his other works. Nora and Torvald try to live up to their society's ideals for how men and women should behave, but both of them become victims to society's unrealistic expectations. The truth in this case is a lit match that leads to a metaphorical explosion. The fact that Nora and Torvald do not agree on the definition of what is right appears to be a product of which gender holds the power in society, rather than an actual gender issue. *A Doll's House* does not offer a conventional happy ending, which so shocked audiences that some theaters actually rewrote the ending when staging it. The ending is also complicated by the fact that Nora's rebellion against expectations has no guarantee of success in a society where women could not even borrow money without a man's signature. A common theme in Ibsen's plays, therefore, is that truth does not always set you free; in fact, sometimes the very best intentions are doomed to failure if society refuses to listen or change. It is a problem that Ibsen faced himself, since his efforts to influence change were invariably seen as shocking and controversial. It is a testament to his persistence and talent that audiences now expect the theater to address social issues. Consider while reading:

1. What are the possible interpretations for the play's title?
2. Does Nora change during the course of the play? Explain.
3. Do you agree with what Kristine does? Why or why not?
4. How do the time period and the location affect the play? How would the play be different if it were set in another time period or location?

Written by Laura Getty

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6.2.1: A Doll's House

A Doll's House Public Domain Henrik Ibsen William Archer [Visit here](#) to read this work.

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6.2.2: An Enemy of the People

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6.3: Drama Exercises

Chapter 6: Drama Exercises



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Alt Text: Drama face masks

Exercise 1: Hypothetical Dialogue.

Write hypothetical dialogue you'd like to have with someone you do not like right now. Be authentic. Be upset and angry.

Exercise 2: But Why?³²

To beef up your skills at creating dialogue AND characters, write a script where you keep asking your characters why. Here's an example:

"Why are you grumpy?"

"I have a hangover."

"Why do you have a hangover?"

"My friend was in a bad accident, and I thought he might die?"

"Why did you think he might die?"

"His girlfriend lied to me about how serious the accident was."

"Why did she lie about that?"

"She's jealous of our relationship."

"Why?"

"I think she's insecure and has trust issues."

Exercise 3: "The Hammer and the Hatchet"³³

A stranger walks into the general store and buys a hammer, a hatchet, some rope, and an apple. You are working at the register. Write the conversation you have with him.

Exercise 4: Presidential.³⁴

Write a presidential speech about why your country needs more ice cream.

Exercise 5: Classmates.

Write dialogue using statements classmates have written in previous exercise posts.

³²[But why](#) [blog.reedsy.com]

³³[The hammer and the hatchet](#) [blog.reedsy.com]

³⁴[Presidential](#) [blog.reedsy.com]

"I think new writers are too worried that it has all been said before. Sure, it has, but not by you."

---Asha Dornfest

7: FLASH FICTION

The definition, essentially, of this genre is: VERY brief fiction (or nonfiction). It consists of a low word count (150-500, typically). Other characteristics include: letting the reader fill in gaps, showing rather than telling, and uses specific examples to explain abstract ideas.

7.1: Flash Fiction

7.2: Flash Fiction Exercises

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7.1: Flash Fiction



Tips for writing flash fiction:³⁶

- Brevity is key.
- All the pieces of typical fiction (character development, plot development, description of scenes, etc.) writing must be made concise. If in a typical fiction piece, a writer would describe the characters in detail, they have to skim that down for Flash Fiction.
- Descriptions need to be specific - A purple shirt might change to a Vikings t-shirt to allow the reader to fill in the backstories. Instead of saying that the character went for a walk by a pond, the pond might have a name (Mini-Mystery Lake) that alludes to something for the reader to wonder about.
- Stylistic features like flashbacks and changing points-of-view will be difficult, so keep to the basics of the story and leave details to the readers' imagination.

A student example of flash fiction

“A conversation you and a stranger have on the phone...”³⁷

I received a phone call from an unfamiliar number, and I decided to answer it. The conversation started and this is how it went.

“Hello, this is Q.”

An older man answered. He said, “Hello, I am trying to get a hold of my daughter. Is this Maria?”

I said, “No this is not, I’m sorry. May I ask who this is? Maybe I can help.”

He said, “My name is Otto. I have not spoken to my kids in a few weeks now. They gave me this phone and I am still unsure how to work it. “

I replied, “Alright, well let’s start with who Maria is.”

“Oh yes, Maria is my oldest daughter of my three children. She has long black hair and light brown eyes. She is pregnant with my first grandchild and I miss her dearly.”

"She sounds lovely Otto. Can I ask what kind of phone do you have? Are you able to touch the screen to open different applications?"

"Yes I can Q."

"Alright. After our conversation, I want you to click on contacts and look for Maria's name on there and then hit the green telephone icon. This will let you call her."

"Alright, I appreciate your help Q. Can I ask you one last question?"

"You certainly can Otto."

"When is the last time you have spoken to your parents?"

"I don't remember honestly. I have been so caught up and work and trying to finish this book I have been writing."

Otto said, "I appreciate you taking the time to help me Q. Do not forget to slow down and relax a little. You might end up helping an old man like me again."

Questions / Activities.

Exercise 7.1.1

HERE IS THE PRACTICE PROJECT =

Compose an original story using these typical steps/elements of Flash Fiction.

Step 1: Write an original flash fiction story with a **catchy first line** like "So, there we were..."

Step 2: Remember to **jump into the action** immediately; you don't have a lot of space to build a plot.

Step 3: **Hint at a backstory** with your character(s), but don't give the reader the backstory - you don't have the space!

Step 4: Feel free to **foreshadow** other things that might happen after this little story!

³⁵You might get the option, in the fiction chapter, to finish off this story as Practice?

³⁶"Creative Writing/Mini Sagas." Wikibooks, The Free Textbook Project. 26 Oct 2009, 19:53 UTC. 18 Nov

2016, 16:10 <https://en.wikibooks.org/w/index.php?title=Creative_Writing/Mini_Sagas&oldid=1648560>. Text is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License.

³⁷"A conversation you and a stranger have on the phone.." by Willow King is licensed CC-BY-NC-SA. It was created for NDSCS English 211 in the Spring of 2021.

7.2: Flash Fiction Exercises

These may or may not be assigned by your instructor, but they are still really cool little exercises!

Exercise 1: Line Exchange.

Give a sentence (line) to a classmate and then “steal” a sentence (line) to use from a classmate for this flash fiction activity. Then compose one flash fiction piece of about 100 words, then another flash fiction story of 150-200 words, and THEN one more flash fiction piece of 250-300 words.

Flash Fiction Examples of Line Exchanges.

Student Example #1³⁸ = The sentence used: “She solemnly waited at the bus stop.”

She checked her phone: 6:52. “six fifty-two, six fifty-two,” she chanted under her breath, shifting on the balls of her feet. *Stop*. She lowered her heels to the ground. She practiced steadying her breathing. In, two, three, four. Out, two, three, four. Though she kept her eyes fixed on the sidewalk below her, the sound of cars passing was deafening. Her dress cuffs itched. She squeezed her eyes closed and flicked her right hand. *Stop; people will see*. She wills her hand to still. Opening her eyes once more, she checked her phone: 6:53. *Why is it so bad today*, she thought with a frown. *Because today is going to be different: an office party. Joy. What am I going to talk about? How can I hide my autism? Stop thinking about it*. The bus always came at seven, she knew. She knew because she took it every weekday to get to work. She had six minutes until the bus came, and only then could she relax because she hadn’t missed it. From there, she would have twenty minutes to read from her book until the bus stopped at the plaza. From there, she would get her French vanilla coffee and cinnamon bun from the coffee shop across from her work. At the front desk of her work, she would sign in at 7:30 exactly. No one had to know how pivotal this routine was to her, especially her boss. How would he react if he knew about her disability? He would never promote her, that’s for sure. He probably would have never hired her in the first place. *Stop thinking about it*. She checked her phone again: 6:55. She recalled her mother’s words: *Don’t make a scene*. She took a deep breath and schooled her features. *Relax*. She solemnly waited at the bus stop.

Student Example #2³⁹ = Sentence used: “Thoughts, flooding my head like waves on the beach.”



"wave, red beach, vieques" by [sandcastlematt](#) is licensed under [CC BY-NC 2.0](#).

Alt Text: Waves

Laying in my room looking at my ceiling. Thoughts, flooding my head like waves on the beach. My mind congested but my body

resting. Who knew being a teenager was fun but challenging at the same time? A room to myself is my own freedom. My time to reflect on my day, reflect on my life, reflect on everything that is going on around me. Feelings, crossing me like a busy intersection. How do I feel so many things at once? I wanted to grow up and be an adult, but now I realise being young ain't bad after all.

Laying in my empty room looking up at my blank ceiling. Thoughts, flooding my head like waves on the beach. My mind is congested with so much going on in there, but my body is resting and at peace. Having a room all to myself is my own freedom. It's my time to reflect on my day, reflect on my life, reflect on everything that is going on around me. Feelings, crossing me like a busy intersection. Not just an intersection but an intersection in the busiest city. How do I feel so many things at just one time? My body lays still in bed, but my mind constantly feels like it's on a treadmill that doesn't have an off button. I wanted to grow up and be an adult so badly. In fact, it'd be the only thing I would wish for when blowing out my candles on my birthday. But now I realise being young ain't so bad after all.

After a long, busy day here I lay all by myself in my empty room looking up at my blank ceiling. Thoughts, flooding my head like waves on the beach. Except tonight it feels like a tsunami. My mind is congested and filled with a mix of thoughts and emotions. There is so much going on in there but I can't even figure out what it is. My mind is foggy like clouds on a rainy day. Deep, dark grey clouds with lightning and thunder. All of this going on in my mind, however my body is resting and at peace like a quiet, back street road. Having a room all to myself is my own type of freedom. It feels like I am outer space, living on my own planet or even in another galaxy. That's my time to reflect on my day, reflect on my life, reflect on everything that is going on around me. Feelings, crossing me like a busy intersection. Not just an intersection but an intersection in the busiest city. With car horns going off, many people walking the streets, loud noises from all the buses and trains, the sirens from ambulances. It all gets too much for me. How do I feel so many things at just one time? My body lays as still in bed as ever, but my mind constantly feels like it's on a treadmill that doesn't have an off button. I really wanted to grow up and be an adult so badly. In fact, I couldn't wait to be called an adult one day. It would be the only thing I'd wish for when blowing out my candles on my birthday. But now I realise being young ain't so bad after all.

Student Example #3⁴⁰ = Sentence stolen: "I woke up to silence and darkness."



"Very cool dark clouds" by [joshme17](#) is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#).

Alt Text: Darkness

I woke up to silence and darkness. I could feel boards beneath my body. I didn't know where I was or who was there with me. My only way of knowing was that I was taken on the corner of 49 and 6th street. Taken in such a way that nobody realized that I was gone. I was starting to wonder if anyone was ever going to come looking for me. I had no family and was able to make money working on such a corner. I had nothing to live for, but right at that moment, I wanted to live to see another day.

I woke up to silence and darkness. I could feel the creaking unstable boards beneath my trembling corpse. I had no idea where I was or what kind of person was there with me. The only thing that I knew at the moment was that I was taken on the lively corner

of 49 and 6th. I was taken in such an unforthcoming way that not one single person detected it. I was getting worried and started to ponder whether or not anyone would come to a reckoning for me. I knew that there was a slim chance of anything adequate coming out of this. I had no family which meant that I had no means of support other than my job working on such a corner. I had nothing to live for, but at that very moment, I desired to live to see another day.

I woke up to utter silence and unimaginable darkness. I could feel the creaking unstable boards beneath my trembling corpse. I peered with my eyes but there was nothing in sight. There was a far off blood-curdling scream in the distance that made my rigid body freeze in motion. I had no idea where I was or what kind of awful person was there with me. The only thing that I knew at the moment was that I was taken on the lively corner of 49th and 6th. It was a tall bony man who looked and smelled as if he hadn't freshened up in months. The smell of a rotting animal corpse that lay lifeless on the side of an occupied highway. It angered me that I wasn't able to capture his ungodly facial features. I was taken in such an unforthcoming way that not one single person detected it. It was as if he was a customer that I had to please anyone else but me. I was getting worried and started to ponder whether or not anyone would come to a reckoning for me. I knew there were a slim chance and a long shot of anything adequate coming out of this. I had no family which meant that I had no means of support other than my job working on such a corner as that was my source of income. I had nothing to live for, but at that very moment, I desired to live to see another day.

Exercise 2: 10x10.

Write Ten teeny stories about ten people who live in the same town; each story can't be longer than 10 sentences.

Exercise 3: The Word Salad.⁴¹

Our subconscious minds combine items in unexpected, sometimes whimsical ways. Set a timer for twenty minutes and use at least three of these words in your draft: a red scarf, windshield wiper, chrome, booger, blowtorch, spatula, CD-ROM, postage stamp, frittering, karma, calamity, heartburn, bandage.

Exercise 4: Letter to my younger self.

Choose an age to write to (you at 10? 15?). What would you tell your younger self?

Exercise 5: Advertisement.⁴²

Write an advertisement putting your 12-foot long crocodile on the market. Then write the story behind why you had to sell your pet crocodile in the first place.

³⁸Example from S. M. Prince is licensed CC-BY-NC-SA. It was created for NDSCS English 211 in the Spring of 2021.

³⁹Example by Ambah is licensed CC-BY-NC-SA. It was created for NDSCS English 211 in the Spring of 2021.

⁴⁰This example from Brenna is licensed CC-BY-NC-SA. It was created for NDSCS English 211 in the Spring of 2021.

⁴¹[Word salad](#) [blog.reedsy.com]

⁴²

[blog.reedsy.com]

Dedicated to everyone who wonders if I am writing about them.

I am.

8: FINAL CHAPTER



This final chapter contains brief information, with some samples/examples of the following: Children's Literature, YA (Young Adult) Literature, Sci-Fi, Fantasy, Horror, Humor, Graphic Novels, and Romance. It ends with information on how to get published.

[8.1: Children's Literature](#)

[8.2: Young Adult \(YA\) Literature](#)

[8.3: Sci-Fi](#)

[8.4: Fantasy](#)

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[8.9: How to get published](#)

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8.1: Children's Literature



"2015 - A Golden Year for Children's Literature" by Carol (vanhookc) is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0.

Alt Text: Children books

Children's literature or juvenile literature⁴³ includes stories, books, magazines, and poems that are enjoyed by children. Modern children's literature is typically classified in two different ways: genre or the intended age of the reader.

Children's literature can be traced to stories and songs, part of a wider oral tradition, that adults shared with children before publishing existed. The development of early children's literature, before printing was invented, is difficult to trace. Even after printing became widespread, many classic "children's" tales were originally created for adults and later adapted for a younger audience. Since the fifteenth century much literature has been aimed specifically at children, often with a moral or religious message. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are known as the "Golden Age of Children's Literature," because many classic children's books were published then.

Definition:

The *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature* notes that "the boundaries of genre... are not fixed but blurred". Sometimes, no agreement can be reached about whether a given work is best categorized as literature for adults or children. Some works defy easy categorization.

Classification:

Children's literature can usually be divided into categories, either according to genre or the intended age of the reader.

BY GENRE

A literary genre is a category of literary compositions. Genres may be determined by technique, tone, content, or length. According to Anderson, there are six categories of children's literature (with some significant subgenres):

- Picture books, including concept books that teach the alphabet or counting for example, pattern books, and wordless books
- Traditional literature, including folktales, which convey the legends, customs, superstitions, and beliefs of people in previous

- civilizations. This genre can be further broken into subgenres: myths, fables, legends, and fairy tales
- Fiction, including fantasy, realistic fiction, and historical fiction
- Non-fiction
- Biography and autobiography
- Poetry and verse

BY AGE CATEGORY

The criteria for these divisions are vague, and books near a borderline may be classified either way. Books for younger children tend to be written in simple language, use large print, and have many illustrations. Books for older children use increasingly complex language, normal print, and fewer (if any) illustrations. The categories with an age range are these:

- Picture books, appropriate for pre-readers or children ages 0–5
- Early reader books, appropriate for children ages 5–7. These are often designed to help children build their reading skills
- Chapter books, appropriate for children ages 7–12
 - Short chapter books, appropriate for children ages 7–9
 - Longer chapter books, appropriate for children ages 9–12
- Young adult fiction, appropriate for children ages 12–18



"INDEX: Views" by @boetter is licensed under CC BY 2.0.

Alt Text: sticky notes on a wall filled with brainstorming ideas

Brainstorming:

In order to write a good book for children⁴⁴, you must do the following:

- Use funny words.
- Do not use inappropriate language.
- Use a readable font (large enough for everyone to read).
- Use bright colors while drawing a picture to catch the child's eye.
- Keep the reader interested in the book.
- Make sure that the theme of the story is clear and understandable so the children can relate to what is happening in the story and be interested in what happens next.
- Write about something you learned or experienced when you were in that children's age group you want to write about.
- Make the characters' characteristics interesting and clear.

- Ask children's opinions and suggestions on what you are writing. Use some children's interests.
- Make sure that the pictures depict this very well
- Depending on your race you may have different ideas than others. Try to add that into your writing. Religion may also change your writing.
- Include the different aspects of the people (genre, environment, background and such)
- Use easy pictures so children can understand.

Example: The Land of Nod⁴⁵



From breakfast on through all the day

At home among my friends I stay,

But every night I go abroad

Afar into the land of Nod.

All by myself I have to go,

With none to tell me what to do—

All alone beside the streams

And up the mountain-sides of dreams.

The strangest things are there for me,

Both things to eat and things to see,

And many frightening sights abroad

Till morning in the land of Nod.

Try as I like to find the way,

I never can get back by day,

Nor can remember plain and clear

The curious music that I hear.

Student Example(s):

Questions / Activities / Exercises.

⁴³Wikipedia contributors. "Children's literature." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, 3 Jun. 2019. Web. 22 Jun. 2019. Text is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License.

⁴⁴"Writing a Good Book for Children." *Wikibooks, The Free Textbook Project*. 5 May 2014, 18:37 UTC. 22 Jun 2019, 14:33 <<https://en.wikibooks.org/w/index.php...&oldid=2646527>>. Text is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License.

⁴⁵Edited by Dickinson, Joshua. *Readings in Children's Literature*. Compiled from Copyright-Cleared Materials Available on Project Gutenberg or the Web. 03 Nov 19. Email: Jdickinson15@gmail.com

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8.2: Young Adult (YA) Literature

Young Adult Literature is a pretty new genre, and there are many ways to define it. The ALA (American Library Association) says YA Literature includes books written for people 12 to 18-years-old.



"Young Adult Fiction- October 2010" by Pesky Library is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Alt Text: Young adult books

Start with the setting:⁴⁶

YOUR TOWN:

To show the kind of region this your characters are living in, give the town a name that reflects its character. Place names in Massachusetts and Connecticut sound straight out of England; you can use a name like Suffolktown, Studham or Foxboro. A city in the South could have stolen a Native American name like Matchagokie, while your British Columbia town could be named Quappasett or something else that reflects the First Nations history of that province. Something French-sounding like Guyet could set your story in Quebec. Towns in Southern California often have Spanish names like Los Higos; consider using one of these if you are writing a story about your SoCal teens. If you want to give the reader the idea that your town is right in the middle of nowhere in Middle America, try a name like Janesville or Oakville.

YOUR SCHOOL:

You will most likely make some mention of the characters' school in the story, and if you bring the school in the story often enough, you will probably have to come up with a name. Many high schools just take their name from the town they are in: Fairsprings High School, Elmtown High School. In New York city there are schools named simply by P.S. and a number: P.S. 132. Your Southern California high school will often have a Spanish name with a pretty meaning: Robles Lindos. And many high schools named themselves after public figures: Eisenhower High or William Randolph Hearst High School.

The names of schools can carry a symbolic meaning. A high school could be named Sweet Groves while the students there have struggle-filled lives that are anything but sweet. The school in *The Escape* is named Lincoln High, which reflects the faculty's hypocritical proclamations about freedom.

A school's mascot can give you some idea of what the faculty of the high school aspire to. A mascot like the Trojans would show

that they hope to give teens a classical education, and if the mascot is the Spartans it would hint that the school is pretty strict, and the sports teams have a "go merciless" on the enemy ethos. A feline mascot (the lions, the cougars, the jaguars) could be more playful, but would still be a sign that the principal hopes his students will "claw" rival schools. Mascots can be ironic: after all, in real life, the mascot for conformist Columbine High School was the Rebels. Choice of mascot can also set the tone for your story: if your students are known as the Turkeys, your story becomes light-hearted and even silly.

Creating your characters:⁴⁷

The character's external aspects include factors such as age, race, gender, physical strength, health, disability, clothing, and jewelry.

A character's appearance is probably the most basic technique of characterization and individualization: what a person looks like reveals a great deal about who that person is, their attitude, perhaps even their mental state, their economic and social status, and so on. We sometimes form our initial attitude about a person based on their appearance, and we either like or dislike them; we either take them seriously or we dismiss them.

Although some stories rely on external character aspects in their plot—for instance in the film *Speed*, the antagonist is caught because one of their fingers is missing—not all stories do so. This does not mean, however, that the author does not need to know what the character looks like. The author should know his character's external aspects even if none of these will make it into the story, even if the plot will not rely on them. When the author does include external aspects of character in the story, he must make sure that every aspect mentioned serves a purpose. No aspect should be brought up unless it will be paid off; the external aspects must have story consequences. External aspects of character matter: they are the significant details that reveal character nature and past, they affect the formation of character, they can create a need, have thematic significance, serve as motifs, limit and create opportunities for action, and be consistent or contrast with the character's story function.

EXTERNAL ASPECTS:

The most obvious external factors of a character that influence their formation as a person are gender, race, and physical appearance. This is because gender, race, and physical appearance influence the formative experiences a person will go through, experiences that determine who they become and affects their way of seeing the world as well as themselves.

Race is another external factor that affects the development of a person's nature because race determines what kind of experiences a person will have, how they will be treated, and it comes with expectations, like gender, of what is acceptable and what is not. An African-American or Asian or Arab child experiences different things than does a white child, even if they live in the same neighborhood. Of course, a Hispanic teen attending a predominantly Hispanic high school in Southern California has different experiences than a Hispanic teen who attends Beverly Hills High School.

Besides race and gender, physical factors have a great deal of influence on the formation of a character. A fat kid lives in a different world than a slim kid, even if they live in the same neighborhood and are the same gender and race. An attractive person lives a different kind of existence than an unattractive one.

Of course, gender, race, and physical appearance are not the only external factors that can affect a character's formation. Take for instance a teenager who can't afford the right clothes and has to wear clothing from a thrift store instead.⁴⁸ This will have an impact on them, one way or the other. It will affect how they feel about themselves, and it will motivate them to do something to fit it; perhaps they will take a job at the expense of academics. It may force them to compensate by focusing on being a perfect student. Whatever happens as a result, their clothing will affect them in a way that will have consequences.



"Some Books" by Ben Oh is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Alt Text: Bookshelf filled with books

Themes to consider for YA literature:

- Teen Pregnancy
- Body Image
- Suicide and Depression
- Academic Pressure
- Drugs
- Dealing with Loss
- Bullying
- Sexual Orientation
- Teen Angst
- Poverty and Socioeconomic Status
- Eating Disorders
- Growing Up Different

Items to note about YA:

Since YA is the newest genre, there's much more buzz about it, and here's what people are saying...

Students who read YA⁴⁹ are more likely to appreciate literature and have stronger reading skills than others. YA also allows teachers to talk about "taboo" or difficult topics with their students. For example, a 2014 study shows that using Laurie Halse Anderson's novel *Speak* aided in discussions on consent and complicity. Those who read about tough situations like date rape are more emotionally prepared to handle the situation if it arises. It is important to use diverse literature in the classroom, especially in discussing taboo topics, to avoid excluding minority students.

- Literature written for young adults can also be used as a stepping stone to canonical works that are traditionally read in classrooms, and required by many school curriculums. In *Building a Culture of Readers: YA Literature and the Canon* by Kara Lycke, Lycke suggests pairing young adult literature and canon works to prepare young adults to understand the "classic literature" they will encounter. YA can provide familiar and less alienating examples of similar concepts than those in "classic literature."

Diversity

- English language young adult fiction and children's literature in general have historically shown a lack of books with a main character who is a person of color, LGBT, or disabled. In the UK 90% of the best-selling YA titles from 2006 to 2016 featured white, able-bodied, cis-gendered, and heterosexual main characters. Between 2006–2016, eight percent of all young adult authors published in the UK were people of color.

Criticism

Criticism has been put forth against YA fiction for being heavily commercialized and marketed and reinforced by capitalist institutions such as Hollywood, the media and a publishing industry lacking diversity. Others have critiqued commercial YA novels and franchises for implicitly promoting capitalism and reactionary ideologies even when the books may seem progressive. Author Ewan Morrison says: "The dystopian narratives which are currently consuming the minds of millions of teens worldwide are now communicating right-wing ideas." Andrew O'Hehir, describing commercial YA novels, wrote: "They are propaganda for the ethos of individualism, the central ideology of consumer capitalism, which also undergirds both major political parties and almost all-American public discourse."

Student Example(s):

Questions / Activities / Exercises.

⁴⁶"Writing Adolescent Fiction/Setting." *Wikibooks, The Free Textbook Project*. 9 Jun 2019, 20:58 UTC. 22 Jun 2019, 14:49 <https://en.wikibooks.org/w/index.php?title=Writing_Adolescent_Fiction/Setting&oldid=3551328>. Text is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License.

⁴⁷"Writing Adolescent Fiction/Creating your characters." *Wikibooks, The Free Textbook Project*. 31 Dec 2014, 04:28 UTC. 5 Dec 2016, 18:24 <https://en.wikibooks.org/w/index.php?title=Writing_Adolescent_Fiction/Creating_your_characters&oldid=2750830>. Text is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License.

⁴⁸Unless they grew up in the 1990s when wearing secondhand stuff was super cool. Just saying.

⁴⁹Wikipedia contributors. "Young adult fiction." Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 7 Dec. 2021. Web. 9 Dec. 2021.

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8.3: Sci-Fi



Bookcase of science fiction books

"Sci-fi/fantasy" by [quinn.anya](#) is licensed under [CC BY-SA 2.0](#).

Alt Text: Sci-fi books in a library

Science fiction⁵⁰ became popular when Mary Shelley published *Frankenstein* in 1818 and has become a diverse genre in books and film. It may seem challenging to write, but if you have a good story in your head you can easily work through it. Once you have inspiration and design your setting and characters, you can write a science fiction story that readers could enjoy!

What is the difference between fantasy⁵¹ and science fiction⁵²? At first glance, it can seem like a simple question. Science fiction often takes place in a dystopian society sometime in the future and contains elements of advanced technology. A fantasy story, on the other hand, is usually set in the fantasy realm and includes mythical creatures and supernatural powers. Though the similarities between these two genres are readily apparent, there are more similarities and crossovers between the two genres than first meets the eye.

Read old and new science fiction writers to see what ideas have been done. Go to your local library or bookstore and browse the science fiction section. Read the back-cover blurbs to see what stories they've written and read through the whole book if it interests you. This way, you'll get an idea of how to write effectively in the genre.

- Try authors like Ray Bradbury, H.G. Wells, Isaac Asimov, and Andy Weir.
- Ask an English teacher or a librarian for suggestions on books or authors.
- Read writers for the format/genre that you want to write, such as screenwriters if you want to do a screenplay or short story writers for a short story.

Watch science fiction movies to get visually inspired. Find movies with premises that interest you and take a few hours to watch them. Write notes on what set pieces or ideas you like so you can reference them later when you're writing. Listen to the dialogue to get a sense of how your characters should speak.

- Watch older movies like *Jurassic Park*, *Blade Runner*, *Alien*, or *Star Wars*, as well as new movies like *The Martian*, *Ex Machina*, *Interstellar*, and *Arrival*.
- **Look online or scientific journals for recent breakthroughs.** When new discoveries are made, they're often published in many magazines or journals. Write down any discoveries or articles that are interesting so you can incorporate the ideas into your writing.

- Look for journals that cover multiple areas of science, such as *Nature* or *Science*

Stay up to date with current world news to get real-life inspiration. If you plan on writing a science fiction story that takes place in the future, use events currently happening in the world to help shape your universe. Watch or listen to news from around the world to get your inspiration. This could help you develop a realistic future, or even something you could incorporate into a world of your own.

- For example, if news came out about the discovery of a new super virus⁵³, you could write a story about the last few survivors or how finding a cure went wrong.

Use the “What if...” thesis model to generate a story premise. Ask yourself questions like “What if this happened?” or “What if this were possible?” Brainstorm ideas based on your research or inspiration to get your ideas on paper. Mark the ideas that you think are strong and expand them into a few sentences detailing your story.

- For example, the “What if” question for *Jurassic Park* is “What if dinosaurs were brought back to life for our entertainment?”

Building the Setting:

Choose a time period for your story. Even though science fiction usually takes place in the future, you can create sci-fi for any time period. Perhaps you want aliens to invade a small town in the 50s or make a time travel story that goes into the past. Think about what time works best for your story and use it as your setting.

- Using the far, far future will give you the most freedom to explore ideas while setting your story in the past will restrict you.
- If you set a story in the past, make sure to research the time period to see what technology existed, what events were taking place, and how people spoke. Check for what clothing they wore and what customs they followed.

Research real locations and their histories to incorporate into your world. Even if your story takes place on a distant planet, take influence from cultures and events here on Earth. This will add more relatability to your story and make the world seem more grounded and real.

- For example, *The Handmaid’s Tale* is a futuristic society, but the themes of treatment of women and slavery come from real culture.
- Experiment with mixing different cultural practices when creating an alien race. For example, you may blend a nomadic culture that dresses like the Vikings.

Incorporate real science into how your world functions. Even if you want people to fly, you should explain how and why they can. Keep most of your science loosely based in reality so readers have a familiar thing to latch onto. If not, they may get lost in the universe you’re creating.

- If you’re introducing new technology that is completely foreign to readers, make sure to describe it in detail so they understand it.
- For example, *The Martian* uses real science to send a man to Mars and for how he’s able to survive once he’s stranded.

Consider all 5 senses when describing your settings.

- Make lists of what your characters would experience when they first arrive in your setting. What sights would they see? Who would be there?
- For example, if your story takes place in a world where the oceans dried up, you could describe the heat, the taste and smell of salt in the air, and the large salt deposits and valleys where the oceans once were.

Write descriptions for each of your settings so you have an understanding of them. Work on brief paragraphs describing the landscape, people, culture, and animals for each of the locations you want to include. Think about the major set pieces in the locations and how the characters interact with them. If you need to get more detailed about wildlife or special quirks about your world, expand your notes further.

- For example, if you were going to do a brief description of Pandora from the movie *Avatar*, you may write: “Pandora is a large jungle planet inhabited by a tall, blue humanoid race called the Na’vi. The Na’vi exist in a tribal society with chiefs and spiritual leaders guiding them. They worship and bond with the lush and colorful wildlife around them.”

Creating Memorable Characters:

Make your protagonist have flaws. Even though a hero sounds like they should be perfect, giving them something that holds them back will help readers empathize with them. Maybe your hero will do anything to save their life, even if it involves killing someone or maybe they're selfish and only care about themselves. Brainstorm common personal flaws and pick one for your character.

- For example, Superman's flaw is that he'll do whatever he can to save the world, but he will not kill. Putting him in a situation where he may have to harm someone makes your hero go through an interesting choice and keeps the reader on the edge of their seat.

Let your antagonist have some redeeming qualities. Just like how heroes can't be entirely good, your villain of the story can't be completely bad. An evil villain just for the sake of being evil makes your character flat and uninteresting. Give the antagonist a redeeming quality, such as doing what they need to save their child, so a reader can sympathize with them.

- For example, HAL from *2001: A Space Odyssey* sees the human crew endangering their mission and chooses to wipe them out.
- Remember that the villain is often the hero of their own story.
- If your villain is a monster, they do not need to have a redeeming quality, but it could be interesting if they do. Consider having a monster feed its children rather than hunting people for fun.

Example: Chapter 5 of Frankenstein by Mary Shelley⁵⁴



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Alt Text: Frankenstein

IT WAS on a dreary night of November that I beheld the accomplishment of my toils. With an anxiety that almost amounted to agony, collected the instruments of life around me, that I might infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing that lay at my feet. It was already one in the morning; the rain pattered dismally against the panes, and my candle was nearly burnt out, when, by the glimmer of the half-extinguished light, I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs.

How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavoured to form? His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful! — Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips.

The different accidents of life are not so changeable as the feelings of human nature. I had worked hard for nearly two years, for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body. For this I had deprived myself of rest and health. I had desired it with an ardour that far exceeded moderation; but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart. Unable to endure the aspect of the being I had created, I rushed out of the room, continued a long time traversing my bed chamber, unable to compose my mind to sleep. At length lassitude succeeded to the tumult I had before endured; and I threw myself on the bed in my clothes, endeavouring to seek a few moments of forgetfulness. But it was in vain: I slept, indeed, but I was disturbed by the wildest dreams. I thought I saw Elizabeth, in the bloom of health, walking in the streets of Ingolstadt. Delighted and surprised, I embraced her; but as I imprinted the first kiss on her lips, they became livid with the hue of death; her features appeared to change, and I thought that I held the corpse of my dead mother in my arms; a shroud enveloped her form, and I saw the grave-worms crawling in the folds of the flannel. I started from my sleep with horror; a cold dew covered my forehead, my teeth chattered, and every limb became convulsed: when, by the dim and yellow light of the moon, as it forced its way through the window shutters, I beheld the wretch — the miserable monster whom I had created. He held up the curtain of the bed and his eyes, if eyes they may be called, were fixed on me. His jaws opened, and he muttered some inarticulate sounds, while a grin wrinkled his cheeks. He might have spoken, but I did not hear; one hand was stretched out, seemingly to detain me, but I escaped, and rushed down stairs. I took refuge in the courtyard belonging to the house which I inhabited; where I remained during the rest of the night, walking up and down in the greatest agitation, listening attentively, catching and fearing each sound as if it were to announce the approach of the demoniacal corpse to which I had so miserably given life.

Oh! no mortal could support the horror of that countenance. A mummy again endued with animation could not be so hideous as that wretch. I had gazed on him while unfinished he was ugly then; but when those muscles and joints were rendered capable of motion, it became a thing such as even Dante could not have conceived.

I passed the night wretchedly. Sometimes my pulse beat so quickly and hardly that I felt the palpitation of every artery; at others, I nearly sank to the ground through languor and extreme weakness. Mingled with this horror, I felt the bitterness of disappointment; dreams that had been my food and pleasant rest for so long a space were now become a hell to me; and the change was so rapid, the overthrow so complete!

Morning, dismal and wet, at length dawned, and discovered to my sleepless and aching eyes the church of Ingolstadt, white steeple and clock, which indicated the sixth hour. The porter opened the gates of the court, which had that night been my asylum, and I issued into the streets, pacing them with quick steps, as if I sought to avoid the wretch whom I feared every turning of the street would present to my view. I did not dare return to the apartment which I inhabited, but felt impelled to hurry on, although drenched by the rain which poured from a black and comfortless sky.

I continued walking in this manner for some time, endeavouring, by bodily exercise, to ease the load that weighed upon my mind. I traversed the streets, without any clear conception of where I was, or what I was doing. My heart palpitated in the sickness of fear; and I hurried on with irregular steps, not daring to look about me:-

“Like one who, on a lonely road,
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And, having once turned round, walks on,
And turns no more his head;
Because he knows a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.”

Continuing thus, I came at length opposite to the inn at which the various diligences and carriages usually stopped. Here I paused, I knew not why; but I remained some minutes with my eyes fixed on a coach that was coming towards me from the other end of the street. As it drew nearer, I observed that it was the Swiss diligence: it stopped just where I was standing, and, on the door being opened, I perceived Henry Clerval, who, on seeing me, instantly sprung out. “My dear Frankenstein,” exclaimed he, “how glad I am to see you! how fortunate that you should be here at the very moment of my alighting!”

Nothing could equal my delight on seeing Clerval; his presence brought back to my thoughts my father, Elizabeth, and all those scenes of home so dear to my recollection. I grasped his hand, and in a moment forgot my horror and misfortune; I felt suddenly, and for the first time during many months, calm and serene joy. I welcomed my friend, therefore, in the most cordial manner, and we walked towards my college. Clerval continued talking for some time about our mutual friends, and his own good fortune in being permitted to come to Ingolstadt. “You may easily believe,” said he, “how great was the difficulty to persuade my father that all necessary knowledge was not comprised in the noble art of bookkeeping; and, indeed, I believe I left him incredulous to the last, for his constant answer to my unwearied entreaties was the same as that of the Dutch school-master in the Vicar of Wakefield: — ‘I have ten thousand florins a year without Greek, I eat heartily without Greek.’ But his affection for me at length overcame his dislike of learning, and he has permitted me to undertake a voyage of discovery to the land of knowledge.”

"It gives me the greatest delight to see you; but tell me how you left my father, brothers, and Elizabeth."

"Very well, and very happy, only a little uneasy that they hear from you so seldom. By the by, I mean to lecture you a little upon their account myself. — But, my dear Frankenstein," continued he, stopping short, and gazing full in my face, "I did not before remark how very ill you appear; so thin and pale; you look as if you had been watching for several nights."

"You have guessed right; I have lately been so deeply engaged in one occupation that I have not allowed myself sufficient rest, as you see: but I hope, I sincerely hope, that all these employments are now at an end, and that I am at length free."

I trembled excessively; I could not endure to think of, and far less to allude to, the occurrences of the preceding night. I walked with a quick pace, and we soon arrived at my college. I then reflected, and the thought made me shiver, that the creature whom I had left in my apartment might still be there, alive, and walking about. I dreaded to behold this monster; but I feared still more that Henry should see him. Entreating him, therefore, to remain a few minutes at the bottom of the stairs, I darted up towards my own room. My hand was already on the lock of the door before I recollected myself I then paused; and a cold shivering came over me. I threw the door forcibly open, as children are accustomed to do when they expect a spectre to stand in waiting for them on the other side; but nothing appeared. I stepped fearfully in: the apartment was empty; and my bedroom was also freed from its hideous guest. I could hardly believe that so great a good fortune could have befallen me; but when I became assured that my enemy had indeed fled, I clapped my hands for joy, and ran down to Clerval.

We ascended into my room, and the servant presently brought breakfast; but I was unable to contain myself. It was not joy only that possessed me; I felt my flesh tingle with excess of sensitiveness, and my pulse beat rapidly. I was unable to remain for a single instant in the same place; I jumped over the chairs, clapped my hands, and laughed aloud. Clerval at first attributed my unusual spirits to joy on his arrival; but when he observed me more attentively he saw a wildness in my eyes for which he could not account; and my loud, unrestrained, heartless laughter frightened and astonished him.

"My dear Victor," cried he, "what, for God's sake, is the matter? Do not laugh in that manner. How ill you are! What is the cause of all this?"

"Do not ask me," cried I, putting my hands before my eyes for I thought I saw the dreaded spectre glide into the room; "he can tell. — Oh, save me! save me!" I imagined that the monster seized me; I struggled furiously, and fell down in a fit.

Poor Clerval! what must have been his feelings? A meeting, which he anticipated with such joy, so strangely turned to bitterness. But I was not the witness of his grief, for I was lifeless, and did not recover my senses for a long, long time.

This was the commencement of a nervous fever, which confined me for several months. During all that time Henry was my only nurse. I afterwards learned that, knowing my father's advanced age, and unfitness for so long a journey, and how wretched my sickness would make Elizabeth, he spared them this grief by concealing the extent of my disorder. He knew that I could not have a more kind and attentive nurse than himself; and, firm in the hope he felt of my recovery, he did not doubt that, instead of doing harm, he performed the kindest action that he could towards them.

But I was in reality very ill; and surely nothing but the unbounded and unremitting attentions of my friend could have restored me to life. The form of the monster on whom I had bestowed existence was forever before my eyes, and I raved incessantly concerning him. Doubtless my words surprised Henry: he at first believed them to be the wanderings of my disturbed imagination; but the pertinacity with which I continually recurred to the same subject, persuaded him that my disorder indeed owed its origin to some uncommon and terrible event.

By very slow degrees, and with frequent relapses that alarmed and grieved my friend, I recovered. I remember the first time I became capable of observing outward objects with any kind of pleasure, I perceived that the fallen leaves had disappeared, and that the young buds were shooting forth from the trees that shaded my window. It was a divine spring; and the season contributed greatly to my convalescence. I felt also sentiments of joy and affection revive in my bosom; my gloom disappeared, and in a short time I became as cheerful as before I was attacked by the fatal passion.

"Dearest Clerval," exclaimed I, "how kind, how very good you are to me. This whole winter, instead of being spent in study, as you promised yourself, has been consumed in my sick room. How shall I ever repay you? I feel the greatest remorse for the disappointment of which I have been the occasion; but you will forgive me."

"You will repay me entirely if you do not discompose yourself, but get well as fast as you can; and since you appear in such good spirits, I may speak to you on one subject, may I not?"

I trembled. One subject! what could it be? Could he allude to an object on whom I dared not even think?

"Compose yourself," said Clerval, who observed my change of colour, "I will not mention it, if it agitates you; but your father and cousin would be very happy if they received a letter from you in your own handwriting. They hardly know how ill you have been, and are uneasy at your long silence."

"Is that all, my dear Henry? How could you suppose that my first thoughts would not fly towards those dear, dear friends whom I love, and who are so deserving of my love."

"If this is your present temper, my friend, you will perhaps be glad to see a letter that has been lying here some days for you; it is from your cousin, I believe."

Student Example(s):

Questions / Activities / Exercises.

⁵⁰Wikihow contributors. "How to Write Science Fiction." Wikihow. 29 May 2019. Web. 22 June 2019. <http://www.wikihow.com/Write-Science-Fiction>. Text available under Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0).

⁵¹This category is covered in the next chapter, so this quote helps to explain the differences.

⁵²Written by the MasterClass staff. "Science Fiction vs. Fantasy: How Are Science Fiction and Fantasy Distinct?" <https://www.masterclass.com/articles...ntasy-distinct>

⁵³WHOA. This was written in 2019!

⁵⁴"Shelley, of course, started the modern genre of science fiction with her famous novel, and introduced a whole new mythology into human thought." – This commentary comes from the *Sci-fi & Fantasy Anthology* by Whatcom Community College; it is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, except where otherwise noted.

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8.4: Fantasy

Fantasy⁵⁵ as a genre has even older and more tangled roots than Sci-Fi, since it utilizes the oldest source material human culture created: myth, legend, folklore, ritual, and religion. Maybe that is why comprehensive scholarly fantasy anthologies are so hard to find, scholars don't know quite what to put in them.



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Alt Text: Fantasy Centre bookstore

Differences between fantasy and earlier fantastic works⁵⁶

Even the most fantastic myths, legends and fairy tales differ from modern fantasy genre in three respects:

- Modern genre fantasy postulates a different reality, either a fantasy world separated from ours, or a hidden fantasy side of our own world. In addition, the rules, geography, history, etc. of this world tend to be defined, even if they are not described outright. Traditional fantastic tales take place in our world, often in the past or in far off, unknown places. It seldom describes the place or the time with any precision, often saying simply that it happened "long ago and far away." (A modern, rationalized analog to these stories can be found in the Lost World tales of the 19th and 20th centuries.)
- The second difference is that the supernatural in fantasy is by design fictitious. In traditional tales the degree to which the author considered the supernatural to be real can span the spectrum from legends taken as reality to myths understood as describing in understandable terms more complicated reality, to late, intentionally fictitious literary works.
- Finally, the fantastic worlds of modern fantasy are created by an author or group of authors, often using traditional elements, but usually in a novel arrangement and with an individual interpretation. Traditional tales with fantasy elements used familiar myths and folklore, and any differences from tradition were considered variations on a theme; the traditional tales were never intended to be separate from the local supernatural folklore. Transitions between the traditional and modern modes of fantastic literature are evident in early Gothic novels, the ghost stories in vogue in the 19th century, and Romantic novels, all of which used extensively traditional fantastic motifs, but subjected them to authors' concepts.

By one standard, no work created before the fantasy genre was defined can be considered to belong to it, no matter how many fantastic elements it includes. By another, the genre includes the whole range of fantastic literature, both the modern genre and its traditional antecedents, as many elements which were treated as true (or at least not obviously untrue) by earlier authors are wholly fictitious and fantastic for modern readers. But even by the more limited definition a full examination of the history of the fantastic in literature is necessary to show the origins of the modern genre. Traditional works contain significant elements which modern fantasy authors have drawn upon extensively for inspiration in their own works.

Example: “The Three Infernal Jokes” by Lord Dunsany⁵⁷

This is the story that the desolate man told to me on the lonely Highland road one autumn evening with winter coming on and the stags roaring.

The saddening twilight, the mountain already black, the dreadful melancholy of the stags' voices, his friendless mournful face, all seemed to be of some most sorrowful play staged in that valley by an outcast god, a lonely play of which the hills were part and he the only actor.

For long we watched each other drawing out of the solitudes of those forsaken spaces. Then when we met he spoke.

“I will tell you a thing that will make you die of laughter. I will keep it to myself no longer. But first I must tell you how I came by it.”

I do not give the story in his words with all his woeful interjections and the misery of his frantic self-reproaches for I would not convey unnecessarily to my readers that atmosphere of sadness that was about all he said and that seemed to go with him wherever he moved.

It seems that he had been a member of a club, a West-end club he called it, a respectable but quite inferior affair, probably in the City: agents belonged to it, fire insurance mostly, but life insurance and motor-agents too, it was in fact a touts' club. It seems that a few of them one evening, forgetting for a moment their encyclopedias and non-stop tyres, were talking loudly over a card-table when the game had ended about their personal virtues, and a very little man with waxed moustaches who disliked the taste of wine was boasting heartily of his temperance. It was then that he who told this mournful story, drawn on by the boasts of others, leaned forward a little over the green baize into the light of the two guttering candles and revealed, no doubt a little shyly, his own extraordinary virtue. One woman was to him as ugly as another.

And the silenced boasters rose and went home to bed leaving him all alone, as he supposed, with his unequalled virtue. And yet he was not alone, for when the rest had gone there arose a member out of a deep arm-chair at the dark end of the room and walked across to him, a man whose occupation he did not know and only now suspects.

“You have,” said the stranger, “a surpassing virtue.”

“I have no possible use for it,” my poor friend replied.

“Then doubtless you would sell it cheap,” said the stranger.

Something in the man's manner or appearance made the desolate teller of this mournful tale feel his own inferiority, which probably made him feel acutely shy, so that his mind abased itself as an Oriental does his body in the presence of a superior, or perhaps he was sleepy, or merely a little drunk. Whatever it was he only mumbled, “O yes,” instead of contradicting so mad a remark. And the stranger led the way to the room where the telephone was.

“I think you will find my firm will give a good price for it,” he said: and without more ado he began with a pair of pincers to cut the wire of the telephone and the receiver. The old waiter who looked after the club they had left shuffling round the other room putting things away for the night.

“Whatever are you doing of?” said my friend.

“This way,” said the stranger. Along a passage they went and away to the back of the club and there the stranger leaned out of a window and fastened the severed wires to the lightning conductor. My friend has no doubt of that, a broad ribbon of copper, half an inch wide, perhaps wider, running down from the roof to the earth.

“Hell,” said the stranger with his mouth to the telephone; then silence for a while with his ear to the receiver, leaning out of the window. And then my friend heard his poor virtue being several times repeated, and then words like Yes and No.

“They offer you three jokes,” said the stranger, “which shall make all who hear them simply die of laughter.”

I think my friend was reluctant then to have anything more to do with it, he wanted to go home; he said he didn't want jokes.

“They think very highly of your virtue,” I said the stranger. And at that, odd as it seems, my friend wavered, for logically if they

thought highly of the goods they should have paid a higher price.

"O all right," he said. The extraordinary document that the agent drew from his pocket ran something like this:

"I in consideration of three new jokes received from Mr. Montagu-Montague, hereinafter to be called the agent, and warranted to be as by him stated and described, do assign to him, yield, abrogate and give up all recognitions, emoluments, perquisites or rewards due to me Here or Elsewhere on account of the following virtue, to wit and that is to say that all women are to me equally ugly." The last eight words being filled in in ink by Mr. Montagu-Montague.

My poor friend duly signed it. "These are the jokes," said the agent. They were boldly written on three slips of paper. "They don't seem very funny," said the other when he had read them. "You are immune," said Mr. Montagu-Montague, "but anyone else who hears them will simply die of laughter: that we guarantee."

An American firm had bought at the price of waste paper a hundred thousand copies of The Dictionary of Electricity written when electricity was new,—and it had turned out that even at the time its author had not rightly grasped his subject,—the firm had paid £10,000 to a respectable English paper (no other in fact than the Briton) for the use of its name, and to obtain orders for The Briton Dictionary of Electricity was the occupation of my unfortunate friend. He seems to have had a way with him. Apparently he knew by a glance at a man, or a look round at his garden, whether to recommend the book as "an absolutely up-to-date achievement, the finest thing of its kind in the world of modern science" or as "at once quaint and imperfect, a thing to buy and to keep as a tribute to those dear old times that are gone." So he went on with this quaint though usual business, putting aside the memory of that night as an occasion on which he had "somewhat exceeded" as they say in circles where a spade is called neither a spade nor an agricultural implement but is never mentioned at all, being altogether too vulgar. And then one night he put on his suit of dress clothes and found the three jokes in the pocket. That was perhaps a shock. He seems to have thought it over carefully then, and the end of it was he gave a dinner at the club to twenty of the members. The dinner would do no harm he thought—might even help the business, and if the joke came off he would be a witty fellow, and two jokes still up his sleeve.

Whom he invited or how the dinner went I do not know for he began to speak rapidly and came straight to the point, as a stick that nears a cataract suddenly goes faster and faster. The dinner was duly served, the port went round, the twenty men were smoking, two waiters loitered, when he after carefully reading the best of the jokes told it down the table. They laughed. One man accidentally inhaled his cigar smoke and spluttered, the two waiters overheard and tittered behind their hands, one man, a bit of a raconteur himself, quite clearly wished not to laugh, but his veins swelled dangerously in trying to keep it back, and in the end he laughed too. The joke had succeeded; my friend smiled at the thought; he wished to say little deprecating things to the man on his right; but the laughter did not stop and the waiters would not be silent. He waited, and waited wondering; the laughter went roaring on, distinctly louder now, and the waiters as loud as any. It had gone on for three or four minutes when this frightful thought leaped up all at once in his mind: *it was forced laughter!* However could anything have induced him to tell so foolish a joke? He saw its absurdity as in revelation; and the more he thought of it as these people laughed at him, even the waiters too, the more he felt that he could never lift up his head with his brother touts again. And still the laughter went roaring and choking on. He was very angry. There was not much use in having a friend, he thought, if one silly joke could not be overlooked; he had fed them too. And then he felt that he had no friends at all, and his anger faded away, and a great unhappiness came down on him, and he got quietly up and slunk from the room and slipped away from the club. Poor man, he scarcely had the heart next morning even to glance at the papers, but you did not need to glance at them, big type was bandied about that day as though it were common type, the words of the headlines stared at you; and the headlines said:—Twenty-Two Dead Men at a Club.

Yes, he saw it then: the laughter had not stopped, some had probably burst blood vessels, some must have choked, some succumbed to nausea, heart-failure must have mercifully taken some, and they were his friends after all, and none had escaped, not I even the waiters. It was that infernal joke.

He thought out swiftly, and remembers clear as a nightmare, the drive to Victoria Station, the boat-train to Dover and going disguised to the boat: and on the boat pleasantly smiling, almost obsequious, two constables that wished to speak for a moment with Mr. Watkyn-Jones. That was his name.

In a third-class carriage with handcuffs on his wrists, with forced conversation when any, he returned between his captors to Victoria to be tried for murder at the High Court of Bow.

At the trial he was defended by a young barrister of considerable ability who had gone into the Cabinet in order to enhance his forensic reputation. And he was ably defended. It is no exaggeration to say that the speech for the defence showed it to be usual, even natural and right, to give a dinner to twenty men and to slip away without ever saying a word, leaving all, with the waiters, dead. That was the impression left in the minds of the jury. And Mr. Watkyn-Jones felt himself practically free, with all the advantages of his awful experience, and his two jokes intact. But lawyers are still experimenting with the new act which allows a

prisoner to give evidence. They do not like to make no use of it for fear they may be thought not to know of the act, and a lawyer who is not in touch with the very latest laws is soon regarded as not being up to date and he may drop as much as £50,000 a year in fees. And therefore though it always hangs their clients they hardly like to neglect it.

Mr. Watkyn-Jones was put in the witness box. There he told the simple truth, and a very poor affair it seemed after the impassioned and beautiful things that were uttered by the counsel for the defence. Men and women had wept when they heard that. They did not weep when they heard Watkyn-Jones. Some tittered. It no longer seemed a right and natural thing to leave one's guests all dead and to fly the country. Where was Justice, they asked, if anyone could do that? And when his story was told the judge rather happily asked if he could make him die of laughter too. And what was the joke? For in so grave a place as a Court of Justice no fatal effects need be feared. And hesitatingly the prisoner pulled from his pocket the three slips of paper: and perceived for the first time that the one on which the first and best joke had been written had become quite blank. Yet he could remember it, and only too clearly. And he told it from memory to the Court.

"An Irishman once on being asked by his master to buy a morning paper said in his usual witty way, 'Arrah and begorrah and I will be after wishing you the top of the morning.'"

No joke sounds quite so good the second time it is told, it seems to lose something of its essence, but Watkyn-Jones was not prepared for the awful stillness with which this one was received; nobody smiled; and it had killed twenty-two men. The joke was bad, devilish bad; counsel for the defence was frowning, and an usher was looking in a little bag for something the judge wanted. And at this moment, as though from far away, without his wishing it, there entered the prisoner's head, and shone there and would not go, this old bad proverb: "As well be hung for a sheep as for a lamb." The jury seemed to be just about to retire. "I have another joke," said Watkyn-Jones, and then and there he read from the second slip of paper. He watched the paper curiously to see if it would go blank, occupying his mind with so slight a thing as men in dire distress very often do, and the words were almost immediately expunged, swept swiftly as if by a hand, and he saw the paper before him as blank as the first. And they were laughing this time, judge, jury, counsel for the prosecution, audience and all, and the grim men that watched him upon either side. There was no mistake about this joke.

He did not stay to see the end, and walked out with his eyes fixed on the ground, unable to bear a glance to the right or left. And since then he has wandered, avoiding ports and roaming lonely places. Two years have known him on the Highland roads, often hungry, always friendless, always changing his district, wandering lonely on with his deadly joke.

Sometimes for a moment he will enter inns, driven by cold and hunger, and hear men in the evening telling jokes and even challenging him; but he sits desolate and silent, lest his only weapon should escape from him and his last joke spread mourning in a hundred cots. His beard has grown and turned grey and is mixed with moss and weeds, so that no one, I think, not even the police, would recognise him now for that dapper tout that sold *The Briton Dictionary of Electricity* in such a different land.

He paused, his story told, and then his lip quivered as though he would say more, and I believe he intended then and there to yield up his deadly joke on that Highland road and to go forth then with his three blank slips of paper, perhaps to a felon's cell, with one more murder added to his crimes, but harmless at last to man. I therefore hurried on, and only heard him mumbling sadly behind me, standing bowed and broken, all alone in the twilight, perhaps telling over and over even then the last infernal joke.

Student Example(s):

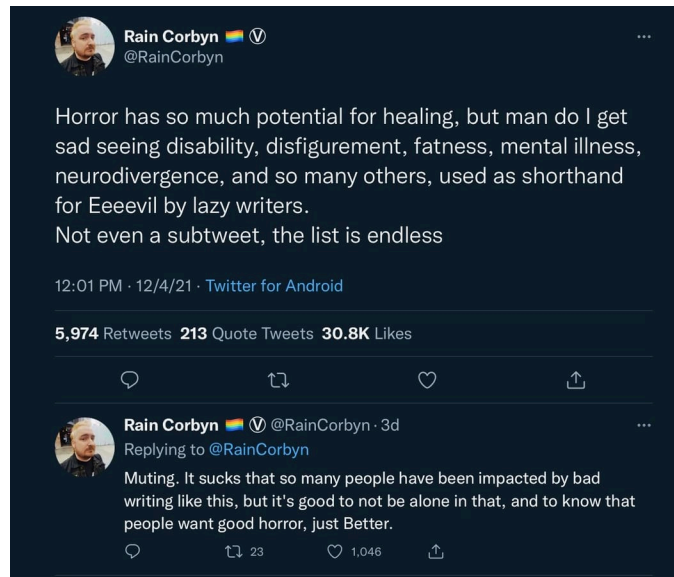
Questions / Activities / Exercises.

⁵⁵Sci-fi & Fantasy Anthology by Whatcom Community College is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, except where otherwise noted.

⁵⁶Wikipedia contributors. "History of fantasy." Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 17 Nov. 2021. Web. 9 Dec. 2021.

⁵⁷This comes from the Sci-fi & Fantasy Anthology by Whatcom Community College; it is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, except where otherwise noted.

8.5: Horror



Horror⁵⁸ stories can be as fun to write as they are to read. A good horror story can gross you out, terrify you, or haunt your dreams. Horror stories depend on the reader believing in the story enough to be scared, disturbed, or disgusted. However, they can be tricky to write well. Like any fiction genre, horror can be mastered with the right planning, patience, and practice.

Be aware of the subjective nature of the horror story. Like comedy, horror can be a difficult genre to write because what makes one person freak out or scream can leave another person bored or emotionless. But like crafting a good joke, crafting a good horror story has been done many times by the masters of the genre. Though your story may not appeal to all readers, or elicit cries of terror, there will likely be at least one reader who will respond in horror to your story.

Read several different types of horror stories. Familiarize yourself with the genre by reading effective examples of horror, from classic ghost stories to contemporary horror writing. As famed horror writer Stephen King once said, to be a real writer, you have to “read and write a lot.” Think about ghost stories or urban legends told around a campfire when you were a kid as well as any horror tales you read in school or on your own. You may want to look at specific examples like:

- “The Monkey’s Paw”, an 18th century tale by William Wymark Jacobs about three terrible wishes granted by a mystical monkey’s paw.
- “The Tell-Tale Heart”, master horror writer Edgar Allan Poe’s psychologically disturbing short story of murder and haunting.
- Neil Gaiman’s take on the nursery rhyme of Humpty Dumpty in “The Case of Four and Twenty Blackbirds.”
- You’d be remiss not to read a horror story by arguably the master of the genre, Stephen King. He has written over 200 short stories and uses many different techniques to scare his readers. While there are many lists of his greatest horror stories, read “The Moving Finger” or “The Children of the Corn” to get a sense of King’s style.
- Contemporary writer Joyce Carol Oates also has a famous horror story called “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?” that uses psychological terror to great effect.
- Modern non-standard horror, like Stephen Milhauser’s “The White Glove,” uses the horror genre to tell a coming-of-age story.

Analyze the horror story examples. Choose one or two examples you enjoy reading or find interesting in terms of how they use a certain setting, plot, character or twist in the story to create horror or terror. For example:

- In King’s “The Moving Finger”, King takes a premise: a man who thinks he sees and hears a moving human finger scratching a wall in his bathroom and then follows the man closely over the span of a short period of time as he tries to avoid the finger, until he is forced to confront his fear of the finger. King also uses other elements like a Jeopardy game and a conversation between the main character and his wife to further create a feeling of suspense and dread.
- In Oates’ “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?”, Oates establishes the main character, a young girl named Connie, by providing scenes of her daily life and then zooms in on one fateful day, when two men pull up in a car while Connie is at

home all alone. Oates uses dialogue to create a sense of dread and allows the reader to experience Connie's growing sense of fear of the threat of these men.

- In both stories, horror or terror is created through a combination of shock and dread, using elements that are possibly supernatural (a moving human finger) and elements that are psychologically disturbing (a young girl alone with two men).

Generating Story Ideas:

Think about what scares you or revolts you the most. Tap into your fears of losing family members, of being alone, of violence, of clowns, of demons, or even of killer squirrels. Your fear will then come across on the page and your experience or exploration of this fear will also grip the reader.

- Make a list of your greatest fears. Then, think about how you would react if you were trapped or forced to confront these fears.
- You could also take a poll of what scares your family, friends, or partners the most. Get some subjective ideas of horror.

Take an ordinary situation and create something horrifying. Another approach is to look at a normal, everyday situation like taking a walk in the park, cutting up a piece of fruit, or visiting a friend and adding a terrifying or bizarre element. Such as coming across a severed ear during your walk, cutting up a piece of fruit that turns into a finger or a tentacle, or visiting an old friend who has no idea who you are or claims you are someone you are not. Use your imagination to create a horrifying spin on a normal, everyday activity or scene.

Create extreme emotions in your reader. Because horror hinges on the subjective reaction of the reader, the story should work to create several extreme feelings in the reader, including:

- Shock: the simplest way to scare the reader is to create shock with a twist ending, a sudden image of gore or a quick moment of terror. However, creating fear through shock can lead to cheap scares and if used too much, can become predictable or less likely to scare the reader.
- Paranoia: the sense that something is not quite right, which can unnerve the reader, make them doubt their own surroundings, and when used to its full effect, make the reader doubt even their own beliefs or ideas of the world. This type of fear is great for slow tension-building and psychological horror stories.
- Dread: this type of fear is the horrible sense that something bad is going to happen. Dread works well when the reader connects deeply to the story and begins to care enough about the characters to fear something bad that is going to happen to them. Inspiring dread in a reader is tricky as the story will need to do a lot of work to keep the reader engaged and involved, but it is a powerful type of fear.

Balance intense negative emotions with intense emotions of wonder or positivity.



Alt text: Horror eyes

Developing the Characters:

Make your reader care about or identify with your main character. Do this by introducing clear details and descriptions of the character's routine, relationships, and point of view. Make your characters believable so others will empathize with them.

- Determine the age and occupation of your character.
- Determine the marital status or relationship status of your character.
- Determine how they view the world (cynical, skeptical, anxious, happy-go-lucky, satisfied, settled).
- Add in specific or unique details. Make your character feel distinct with a certain character trait or tick (a hairstyle, a scar) or a mark of their appearance (an item of clothing, a piece of jewelry, a pipe or cane). A character's speech or dialect can also distinguish a character on the page and make them stand out more to the reader.
- Once your readers identify with a character, the character becomes a bit like their child. They will empathize with the character's conflict and root for them to overcome their conflict, while also realizing that this rarely happens.
- This tension between what the reader wants for the character and what could happen or go wrong for the character will fuel the story and propel your readers through the story.

Be prepared for bad things to happen to your character. Most horror is about fear and tragedy and whether or not your character is capable of overcoming their fears. A story where good things happen to good people may be heart-warming, but it will likely not scare or terrify your reader. In fact, the tragedy of bad things happening to good people is not only more relatable, it will also be full of tension and suspense.

- In order to create conflict in a character's life, you need to introduce a danger or threat to the character, whether it's a moving finger, two men in a car, a mystical monkey's paw or a murderous clown.
- For example, in King's "The Moving Finger", the main character, Howard, is a middle-aged man who enjoys watching Jeopardy, has a comfortable relationship with his wife, and seems to live a decent middle-class life. But King does not let the reader get too comfortable in Howard's normal existence as he introduces a scratching sound in Howard's bathroom. The discovery of the finger in the bathroom, and Howard's subsequent attempts to avoid it, remove it, or destroy it, creates a story where a seemingly normal, likeable man's life is interrupted by the unknown or the unreal.

Allow your characters to make mistakes or bad decisions. Once you have established the threat or danger to the character, you will then need to have your character respond with the wrong move, while convincing themselves they are in fact making the right move or decision against this threat.

- It's important to create enough motivation for the character so their bad decision feels justifiable and not merely stupid or unbelievable. An attractive young babysitter who responds to a masked killer by running not to the telephone to call the police but outside into the deep, dark woods is not only a stupid character move, it also feels unbelievable to the reader or viewer.
- But if you have your character make a justifiable, though flawed, decision in response to a threat, your reader will be more willing to believe and root for that character.
- For example, in King's "The Moving Finger", Howard initially decides not to tell his wife about the finger in the bathroom because he believes he may be hallucinating or confusing the scratching noise for a mouse or animal caught in the bathroom. The story justifies Howard's decision not to tell anyone about the finger by playing off what most people who tell themselves if they witnessed a strange or bizarre event: it wasn't real, or I'm just seeing things.
- The story then justifies Howard's reaction by allowing his wife to go into the bathroom and not comment about seeing a moving finger by the toilet. So, the story plays with Howard's perception of reality and indicates that maybe he did hallucinate the finger.



"Teen Read Week 2008: Books with Bite" by nataliesap is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Alt Text: Display of horror books

Creating a horrific climax or twist ending:

Manipulate the reader but do not confuse them. Readers can either be confused or scared, but not both. Deceiving or manipulating your readers through foreshadowing, shifting character traits, or a revelation of a plot point can all work to build suspense and create anxiety or fear in the reader.

- Hint at the horrific climax of the story by providing small clues or details, such as the label on a bottle that will later come in handy for the main character, a sound or voice in a room that will later become an indication of an unnatural presence, or even a loaded gun in a pillow that may later go off or be used by the main character.
- Build tension by alternating from tense or bizarre moments to quiet moments where your character can take a breath in a scene, calm down, and feel safe again. Then, amp up the tension by re-engaging the character in the conflict and then making the conflict feel even more serious or threatening.
- In "The Moving Finger", King does this by having Howard freak out about the finger, then have a relatively normal conversation with his wife while listening to Jeopardy and thinking about the finger, and then attempt to avoid the finger by going for a walk. Howard begins to feel safe or assured that the finger is not real, but of course, once he opens the bathroom door, the finger seems to have grown longer and is moving much faster than it was before.
- King slowly builds tension for both the character and the reader by introducing the threat and then having it overshadow the rest of the story. As readers, we know the finger is a sign of something bad or possibly evil and are now in a position to watch Howard try to avoid, and then eventually confront this evil.

Avoid clichés. Like any genre, horror has its own set of tropes and clichés that writers should avoid if they want to create a unique, engaging horror story. From familiar images like a deranged clown in the attic to a babysitter alone in a house at night, to familiar phrases like "Run!" or "Don't look behind you!" – clichés are tricky to avoid in this genre.

- Focus on creating a story that feels personally terrifying to you. Or, add a twist to a familiar horror trope, like a vampire who enjoys cake instead of blood, or a man trapped in a dumpster rather than a coffin.
- Remember that too much gore or violence can actually have a desensitizing effect on the reader, especially if the same pools of blood keep happening over and over again in the story. Of course, some gore is good and likely necessary in a horror story. But make sure you use gore in a spot in the story that is impactful or meaningful, so it can punch your reader in the gut, rather than numb them or bore them.
- Another way you can avoid clichés is to focus more on creating a disturbed or unsettled state of mind for your character, rather than images of gore or pools of blood. Pictorial memories often don't stick in a reader's mind, but the effect of these images on a character will likely create a lingering creepiness for the reader. So, aim not for your reader's imagination but

for a disturbance in your character's state of mind.

Example: “The Shivering Skin” by Anonymous⁵⁹

Excerpt of Journal, Unknown Author, Written in 1874

The following is an account on which the circumstances may be found to be unbelievable. I express my deepest condolences with Peter Gregg's family members or friends or anyone who knew him who has happened to come across this document. Peter Gregg was my associate. We had attended the same school of medicine in New Hampshire. At first, he came off as an odd fellow, those of you who know him know that he liked to keep to himself unless you were somehow beneficial to his studies. Over the years I grew to appreciate his work from afar. I noticed his diligence and endless perseverance to keep up his work regardless of the obstacles or unfortunate circumstances that somehow were constantly thrown into his path. Eventually, this admiration could no longer suffice my curiosity and I approached him after one of our early morning lectures. It seemed that he chose to ignore me, but I persisted that he respond and allow me to participate as an assistant in his studies and various experiments. After what seemed to be weeks – or months – of pestering, Gregg gave in to my desires.

Starting as an assistant with Gregg held many similarities to enrolling in a new school of medicine. Gone were the methods of practice on examining cadavers and studying the anatomy of the human body. Phosphorous liquids that glowed an unnatural red and strange jars of blue dust filled my days of study. I never once asked Gregg what medicines or resources he used throughout our experiments out of the fear that he may forbid me to participate in any further activity.

For those of you whose minds are beginning to wander away from my vague ramblings, let me interlude to briefly explain what it was that Gregg and I were studying:

- The integumentary system of the human body was our prime subject. The purpose was to take skin, which is the largest and one of the most important organs in the human body and attempt to reanimate the dead tissue. We did not want to start with cadavers or dead subjects yet, just dead skin. If we were able to reinvigorate the skin cells and bring life back, we would be one step closer to finding a solution to death.
- The effect of temperature on the skin was another essential experiment. One of its functions is to regulate body temperature by sweating when hot and shivering when cold. We concluded that if we were going to try and experiment on the skin in the humid chambers of the Library's West Tower, the skin could produce sweat and get out of our grip. It is difficult to explain when I state that the skin could get out of our grip.

Gregg believed and I should have agreed with him, that the skin could become sentient. He hadn't the faintest idea of the effects of his formula on human skin, so he took every precaution. Due to the skin's tendency to produce sweat to cool down in hot temperatures, we decided it would be safer to experiment in the archives located in the library basement.

We took to action at once. Gregg sent me on a supply run throughout the school. I became drowsy due to sleep loss from the constant raiding of university classrooms night after night. Eventually, I hoarded enough supplies to carry out the experiment. I met Gregg in the bowels of the library at two in the morning. All of the lights had been blown out, so I had to carry my own lantern. As I stepped deeper and deeper into the blackness, I felt an urge of excitement. The excitement could not be exactly attributed to one emotion or the other. I felt inspired; I felt nervous; I felt frightened.

The worst of it came when I had reached the door to the archives. I held the lantern at my side, illuminating everything within a ten meter radius. I could not bring myself to move. Whatever lay in store for me and my future was beyond that door. This was the night I would either be deemed a part of scientific advancement or of catastrophic insanity. Right then, the door swung open to reveal a disgruntled Gregg standing in the dark. Light flickered off his eyes and in the most ironic way, created a sinister appearance. My paralysis broke and I followed Gregg through the archives until we reached the small table in which he had set up the equipment. A small wooden table, roughly six feet long and two feet wide lay next to his collection of liquids and powders. On the table, lay a cadaver. I noticed a miniscule patch of skin had been removed, just above the elbow.

The skin in which Gregg had cut out of the body sat on a stool. Nails were driven into each corner of the square to keep it on the wooden surface. A small candle sat nearby and I placed my lantern next to it. The combined light from both sources created just enough luminance for Gregg to work, but not for me. Gregg told me to stand by and watch. He handed me the journal in which I am writing this document and to record my observations.

I watched as Gregg took a razor and very carefully removed the hair from the skin. Any remaining hair was plucked out with a pair of tweezers. The purpose of this action was to remove any particles which clung to the hair resting on the flesh's surface. This hair caught these particles and protected the skin, but once there was no hair, the skin was vulnerable.

Kregg set down the tweezers and picked up a small syringe. He stuck it into one of his many vials of colored liquid and filled it to roughly halfway. The receptors on my skin alerted my body of the temperature and I shivered; it was cold in the archives and my hair stood up on end. It did not stand on end from the temperature however, but the sight before me. Kregg slowly stuck the syringe in the skin and just gave a small dosage of his formula.

Nothing occurred. Sweat dropped from Kregg's brow despite how cold it was. A single drop landed on the patch of skin. Suddenly, it began to convulse. The outside of the skin bubbled and the sweat glands released what little sweat was left in the skin. The sebaceous glands that produce oil released what little oil was left. It all came out at once and made a thin, liquid membrane on top of the skin. Then it stopped.

Kregg began to furiously whisper in great frustration. I asked him what had happened, if the skin had been alive. Kregg explained that the skin had been alive, yet it believed that a harmful chemical or bacteria was trying to enter the body. It was of a kind the skin had not dealt with before, so it released everything it had to fight it off. Kregg began to shuffle. The main issue in the first trial was that there was not enough skin for cell life to last long enough.

Without hesitation, Kregg filled up the syringe completely. He spun around and bent over the cadaver. I could not see what he was doing until he moved around to the other side of the cadaver. He was injecting the formula in various points throughout the corpse! I meant to speak up, but my cowardice and natural hesitation got the best of me. I could only look on in horror. No precautions had been made, not a single restraint lay on the corpse. We did not know how a large section of skin would react from such a large dosage.

The body began to convulse. Kregg stepped back. I peered closer. It was not the body that convulsed with such violence, but the skin. A horrifying ripping sound began to slowly fill the room. The skin was tearing itself from the cadaver. Kregg could not move. I only saw the back of his head and his frozen body. A loud humming filled the room. It buzzed and rang in my ears. I felt my bones shake. The more it continued, the lower it got. I realized it was not a humming, but the skin moaning. The skin continued to moan until it completely tore itself from the body. It flopped up and fell to the floor, continuing to flail helplessly. Kregg slowly bent down and reached out to pick it back up. The skin latched onto his arm.

Kregg screamed. I could not move. The skin slowly crawled up his body and began to take his form. His screaming became more and more frenzied. I could not stand the sight or sounds before me. I quickly picked up my lantern that lay next to the work table and threw it at Kregg. He stepped towards me, limbs flailing, engulfed in flames. The screaming became a high pitched howl. The thing that was Kregg stepped back and knocked over a crate of old documents. The crate went up in flames and so did the shelf that held it. The banshee-like wail refused to cease and something gave in. My instinct of excitement and survival told me to run. I had no light by which to guide me, but I ran.

I felt myself exit the archives as the warm air from the corridor blew into my face. I fumbled through the dark, hearing cries of hate and pain not too far behind me. I arrived at the stairs to the main level of the library. Quickly, I ascended. I could not waste a single second. Once I reached the top of the stairs, I realized I could not let this creature, this abomination reach the outside world. Despite how I had set it afire, it still came. The cries grew closer as I saw the flickering flames bounce off the stairwell walls. It ascended the corner. I grabbed the nearest large object I could find. It was a chair. I lifted the chair above my head and aimed for the monstrosity. For a brief moment, I made eye contact with the creature. I hoped to see a troubled Kregg, begging for mercy, but all I saw was disgust and a fierce hatred. I threw the chair at the beast and it fell backwards down the stairs.

The flames from the archives caused a section of the library not too far from me to collapse. The building's destruction was now inevitable. I ran out the doors and into the university courtyard. The flaming building lay behind me; my scientific ambition lay behind me. I swore to write this down, despite how illogical and fearsome it may seem. I swore to document what happened. I planned to take off running into the night. I set a new goal to run, to run from science and the horrors of whatever that flesh became.

The more I live on the road though, the hungrier I get. I stare at my frail, dirty hands and think back to the mess they took part in. I think to how the skin rebelled and fought for its life. It became a new creature of unspeakable terror. I think to how my hands have skin on them as well. My entire body is covered in skin. My entire body is covered in horror.

Student Example(s):

Questions / Activities / Exercises.

⁵⁸Wikihow contributors. "How to Write a Horror Story." *Wikihow*. 01 June 2019. Web. 22 June 2019. <http://www.wikihow.com/Write-a-Horror-Story>. Text available under Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0).

⁵⁹Discovered on the *Anonymous Authors Fandom* web site: https://anonymous-authors.fandom.com...Shivering_Skin Their community content is available under [CC-BY-SA](#) unless otherwise noted.

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8.6: Humor

Humor⁶⁰ demands close attention to language at all levels. Making comedy requires a writer to consider diction, of course, but also to be deliberate about intricacies such as sound and rhythm—after all, it's often just a matter of a few syllables that enables one to be silly. Humor also is an effective means by which to teach the second-most-difficult thing to teach young writers: style. (The most difficult thing is how to spell *ukulele*.) Style often is the first element of writing to go when it comes to teaching young writers—in favor of elements such as developing a thesis, supporting that thesis with evidence, and putting a staple in the upper-left hand corner. But in comedic writing, style is an absolute requirement.

In comedy, it's not word choice, but the hunt for the choicest word. And sentences must be tightly woven to serve as the fuse that carries the spark right to an ending that blows readers away. And maybe even enlightens them.

On a much larger scale, humor requires vivid descriptions, dazzling metaphors, splendiferous speech acts, and the skillful interrelation of such elements. Writing comedy entails seeing and creating in content and language those productive occasions and opportunities, requiring the writer's willingness to capitalize on them, to see everything as potential set up, and then to land the punch.

In terms of process, it's industry standard for comedy writing to be collaborative. (My friends had to leave before we finished the last paragraph.) About writing in general, many are convinced of the myth of the lone genius, those gassy know-it-alls, picking off ideas in isolation. But that notion of the writer is so bad there's an essay on it in this collection! With humor, students will need each other in order to generate and to test out material. And there's a model for it: the comedy writers' room. And this model has even made it into pop culture—the writers' room is visited again and again in the television shows *Studio 60 on the Sunset Strip* and *30 Rock*. Sure, the writers' room in *30 Rock* smells, and the writers play pranks on each other, but they get their work done, and seem to have fun doing it. And they eat a lot of pizza. The collaboration humor calls for is not just collaboration with other people—it's also collaboration with other texts, other sources. It takes a great deal of knowledge to make a joke work. True, a lot of it can be done with oodles of Googling, but who knows? That could be a gateway drug, something to fight the lack of information fluency.

Humor not only can help teach the elements of writing and thinking while emphasizing collaboration, but it also powerfully makes the case for writing. For so many students an explicit argument needs to be made for writing because they are always asking themselves this: Why write when I can speak it into my phone and the phone will dutifully transcribe my thoughts? (And the NSA will keep a back-up file!) Humor makes the writing process matter. In this process, invention is true invention: You're creating something never thought of before. (Unless your essay is about airplane peanuts. In which case, change your topic because you're writing a *Seinfeld* rerun.) Comedy helps authors barnstorm brainstorming. It makes the drafting and revising process more multifaceted, open, searching, continuous—it moves from drafting and reviling to drifting and revving, to riffing and devising, through drafting and revising to after drafting and revising (it's not unusual for performance to be a part of the creation of comedy, which must have voice... even if it's Gilbert Gottfried's). Authors who try to create comedy at the spur of the moment most often find out it simply can't be done—it's just too demanding. It's like...

like...like...see? It's really hard!

Of course, just as in any writing class, in a writing class that focuses on comedic technique and process, some communal rules very likely should be established. Is there anything that can't be included in a humorous piece? How do we work together to make the classroom respectful but also lively and productive? Is it really okay to admit that Carrot Top is occasionally funny? It certainly is the case that, as founding members of the International Society for Humor Studies, Alleen Pace Nilsen and Don L. F. Nilsen, note, "humor is a good tool for teaching about censorship"; however, it also must be recognized that humor simply tends toward the irreverent, and that this is, frankly, ideal. Thus, empowered, young writers—who can feed off of transgression, off of calling power into question—are more likely to tip over and crack up some sacred cows. How much better than to have students be scared cowards! Studying comedic techniques, students also become better, more perspicacious (look it up!) readers—they know how humor works, and so might be less apt to fall for it when some pernicious politician or idiot ideologue trumpets venom cut with a little laughter. Armed to the teeth, they're also better able to bite back.

There are three theories of humor: incongruity (putting together what doesn't fit leads to fits of laughter), superiority (seeing others slip on bananas is appealing), and relief (comedy as the jocular discharge of subconscious energies). So, clearly, though

initially it may seem incongruous to teach humor while teaching academic writing, such writing—edgy, engaged, careful and powerful—will be superior to so much of what’s come before it. And what a relief that will be!



"COMEDY CENTRAL UK" by STEVENJOHNSSELLER is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0.

Alt Text: People wearing letters that spell out "Comedy"

Student example: “Snow White, Take II.”⁶¹

ONCE UPON A TIME, there was a princess. She was hot⁶². Apparently everybody in the kingdom thought so, too, because they fawned over her in an extreme display of celebrity-fever. They oohed and ahed over her porcelain skin, even going so far as to nickname her “Snow White.” Because that’s cool. Under their breath, the townspeople declared quietly and between themselves that Snow White was the “fairest of the fair.” She was sweet, and pretty, and everyone loved her, and life couldn’t have been more wonderful. There was only one teensy weensy glitch.

Her step-mother, the queen. This chick was insanely jealous of Snow White. Like, would-attempt-murder jealous⁶³. Only, she was queen, so dirtying her own hands over that little matter was well and truly beneath her. However, hiring a hit-man wasn’t. So she did that. Queeny⁶⁴ did not consult her magic mirror over this dilemma, as she knew her mirror would advise against it. She consulted her mirror every morning with the same intense reverence some grandfathers reserve for their daily newspaper. Every single morning without fail she’d ask the mirror, “Mirror, mirror, on the wall, who’s the fairest of them all?” And her mirror would have liked to have said, “Well I can tell ya who’s *off* the wall, toots, and you bet your britches it ain’t me.” But instead he’d sigh and tell her she was the best, by poll of about three or so more than the princess (though he decided not to tell her the last part). He was glad the queen never asked who the sweetest person was because that would have sharply ended his career as royal advisor.

Day after day the queen would ask the same question, and day after day it was taking longer and longer for the poor mirror to find creative ways of disclosing the ever-narrowing gap between her and her step-daughter. One day the gap closed for good as the last loyal and blind peasant kicked the bucket and the queen was no longer getting pity points. The mirror was finally able to report with thinly-veiled glee that the princess was now the most beautiful girl in all the kingdom, by consensus of literally everyone with working eyeballs⁶⁵. The queen became super upset by this revelation and decided that the only way to regain her status as an attractive older woman was to have the kid bumped off. So she ordered a huntsman to take the girl into the forest, rip out her heart, and then bring it back in a little jewelry box for the queen to keep. Which is exactly what a normal person would request. Except the hit-man somehow had more of a conscience than this fruitcake, since he brought Snow White into the forest and proceeded to explain that her step-mom was planning to have her murdered and that Snow White should probably just hit the road and not plan to come back.

Understandably, this sort of news hits a little hard, so Snow White started to run through the woods, terrified and alone, trying to figure out what was to become of her. Now, in all honesty, death was most likely what was going to become of her until some woodland creatures decided to step in and save the day. As woodland creatures do. They led her to this tiny little cabin in

the middle of the woods which was empty and by all appearances abandoned, so Snow White checked the front door, found it unlocked, and decided to just go ahead and make herself at home. Because breaking and entering is okay when a little birdy tells you to⁶⁶.

So there they were, all singing and doing the dishes, birds and a doe sweeping out the place, raccoons and turtles hanging out the wash, and it's just a party all up in there. And after it was all over the princess was a little exhausted, (hallucinating will do that) and decided to go take a nap. She conked out across seven little beds upstairs, which was strange, since the fact that nobody was home during the day surely meant it was free real estate. It's at this point in our story that seven little dwarves show up. Because even fairytales need to be inclusive⁶⁷.

These seven old and short dudes with names matching the most commonly-felt emotions came home to find their house much, much cleaner than they left it and with a surprising variety of small animals inside, which naturally freaked them out a little bit, so they tip-toed upstairs to see what else had happened while they were at work. There they found this chick had taken over their beds and was out for the count. Rather than do anything, they just sort of stared at her while she slept until she woke up. Which she did, and when she woke up she was quite forgivably alarmed at these tiny intruders to her new house. Upon the explanation that this domain was not her own private property but rather was to be shared collectively, she was apparently ecstatic with the idea of her new roommate situation and proceeded to make them all dinner. The duration of the rest of the evening was rather jovial. As the days went by, this whole situation became fairly convenient for everyone. Snow White had a rent-free living situation, and these little guys had a live-in maid who cooked and cleaned for them, as well as helped them to establish more frequent and careful hygiene practices⁶⁸. This continued for some time, until our villain of the story, Ms. Queen discovered the well-hidden secret of her hit-man and mirror.

One day, as the Queen preened before that poor mirror and asked him to tell her once again who was the most beautiful thing in all the land, the mirror had to declare honestly that since Snow White had not, in fact, kicked the bucket, bought the farm, cashed in, or any other analogy for having her life abbreviated, she was still the fairest of them all. Including the queen. Based on past experience, we should be able to tell pretty accurately what happens next. The queen rolled up her sleeves and decided, "Well, they always say, 'if you want a job done right, you gotta do it yourself.'" So she dug out her cauldron, set the flame on "medium," then poured in a bunch of various obscure liquids and stirred well to combine. Her dipped apples were her specialty, so she decided to make some for the exiled princess as a housewarming gift. Then she disguised herself as a creepy old witch, (because who would ever know the difference, right?) boxed up the apples, and set off for the forest.

Meanwhile, Snow White was happily singing away while she did the daily housework. The birds and forest animals were gathered around to listen to her, as she was just so enchanting and trusting that everything that saw her or heard her automatically fell in love. This was what the wicked stepmother was counting on, as she hobbled into the woods with her basket of totally unsuspecting apples. Somehow the Queen actually managed to find the little cabin, too. I mean, that part was really just glossed over entirely if I remember right. Like, the forest seemed pretty dense and deep, and if that house was all the way in the middle, how in the world did she make it there from the castle in one day? Where was the part where she stopped and tried to ask a turtle for directions? One way or another, she showed up at the Seven Dwarves' house and announced her arrival by knocking on the window, of all things. Snow White opened it and was charmed by the old lady peddling apples, so she accepted a proffered one, took a bite, and BOOM! Dead as a doornail. Or so the Queen thought. So she happily toddled back to her castle, and the mirror once again was forced to say that she was the fairest of them all, and life was grand. For the queen.

For the company of little dudes arriving home that evening, however, life was about to have another very large surprise in the form of their housekeeper and roommate lying dead on the floor and all the woodland creatures mourning her. Which was unfortunate, to say the least, and they were so distraught over the fact that they were going to have to remind themselves to wash their own hands again that they built Snow White an above-ground crypt with a glass top so they and anyone passing by would be able to see how beautiful she was. Apparently nobody noticed that she was still breathing to some extent, but, ya, know. Whatever.

So there they all were. Deer, rabbits, turtles, skunks, perhaps a goldfish or two, and some birds and raccoons for good measure were all gathered around Snow White's coffin with the seven little men, grieving the loss of their beloved princess. Tears swept down everyone's faces and snouts while sobs shook the forest trees which now also have feelings because I said so. Do I know that it's Disney accurate? Well, do you know that it's *not*?? And they're all sad, and crying, and everything is depressing until who should ride up but some dude out for an afternoon galavant on a horse through the woods for no apparent reason whatsoever! He saw this dead girl, and everyone so sad and upset around her coffin, and thought to himself, 'Whoa. She's hot. I should kiss her. That would be respectful and also would probably make everyone feel better.' So this little necrophiliac⁶⁹ took off the glass lid covering Snow White, leaned over this by-all-accounts dead person, and planted a wet one on her lips. Now, to someone who's not actually as dead as people thought they were, that would be somewhat surprising.

Since Snow White's indefinite hibernation was so rudely disrupted by this guy macking on her, she sat up. Which did not, for some

reason, seem to have the same effect on the dwarves and forest friends as it would have on me. Everyone was just delighted that her royal hotness was alive and well after all, and Snow White was delighted to find that the random stranger who had broken the spell of the Wicked Witch was actually a handsome prince with daddy's money and a sweetheart smile. So she allowed him to scoop her up onto his prancing steed, and with a goodbye wave to all her woodland friends and a kiss on top of each of the seven little bald dudes' heads, she and her hot stranger rode off into the distance. Presumably to get married and live more-or-less happily ever after.

The End, I guess.

Questions / Activities / Exercises.

⁶⁰Snippet from = Theune, Michael. "Excellent Academic Writing Must Be Serious." *Bad Ideas About Writing*. Edited by Cheryl E. Ball and Drew M. Loewe. Morgantown, WV: West Virginia University Libraries, Digital Publishing Institute, 2017. CC-BY.

⁶¹"Snow White, Take II" by Megan Guenther is licensed under CC-BY-NC-SA. It was created for NDSCS English 211 in the Spring of 2021.

⁶²Love the bluntness.

⁶³What great little sidebars!

⁶⁴Great nickname!

⁶⁵I adore the sass/snark throughout!

⁶⁶Again, the sidebars are fantastic.

⁶⁷Bingo!

⁶⁸Hee hee.

⁶⁹Yep, call him what he was.

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8.7: Graphic Novels



"graphic novels at Edinburgh Book Fest 02" by byronv2 is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0.

Alt Text: Graphic novels

Learn a drawing style.⁷⁰ Manga and US Comic styles are popular, or you can draw humorous cartoons and give it a quirky edge. There are many resources available to learn how to draw. Your local library or bookstore is a great place to find "How to draw" books, but the only way to really improve your drawing skills is to practice. To accelerate the process, have a skilled artist such as a teacher or friend give you lessons, or look over your work and give you pointers. Often just watching a talented artist work is enough to open your mind to the techniques and possibilities. Most of all, don't be afraid to experiment with style. Finding your unique style is often more valuable than simply drawing like everybody else.

Come up with a cast of characters. When doing this, think both about their appearance, and their personality and history. If you have a plot in mind already, that will drive the creation of your characters. Develop the character's appearance by drawing them in as many ways as you can: you will improve your drawing ability and your understanding of the character. Use the character's appearance to develop their personality and use the personality to develop the appearance.

Write out your ideas for the story. They will start out as rough ideas, but eventually you will want a fully developed plot. You can develop this plot in many ways: you can draw out rough pages, you can write it as a narrative story, you can write a page full of ideas, a page full of sketches, or you can write it as a script. Keep in mind, though, that graphic novels take up more space than normal novels, so the plot shouldn't be quite as long. Use the characters and settings to figure out the plot.

Thumbnails can also be an invaluable tool to organize the production of the book. Thumbnails can be changed much easier than finished pages. Consider the thumbnails your "map" to the finished product. If you have other artists helping you, or if you are dealing with print shops yourself then handing them a photocopy of your finished thumbnails will ensure that everyone knows what you expect the book to be.

Create the finished pages, also known as the original art. There are many ways to work, and they will depend on many factors. If you are publishing it yourself, then you must consider how it will be printed, how it will be trimmed, how it will be bound, how it will be transported, and how it will be distributed, just to name a few. If you are working with a publisher, they will tell you all the specifications. If you are creating a one-off book, then you have a lot more freedom, and can incorporate any medium you want. The basic questions are: Will there be color, or just black and white? Will the edges of the book be trimmed down (allowing bleed) or left untrimmed (no bleed). Bleed is when page contents extend past the edge of the page and are trimmed down to the final size after binding. It allows for a more professional look, since most printers can't reliably print all the way to the paper's edge. Binding (how the pages are held together) is also an important consideration since it will affect how close your artwork can go

to the center of the book. There are many types of binding available, all with benefits and drawbacks. The general rule is to keep your important content about 1/2" from the edges and "gutter" (bound side) of the page. Most graphic novels will have three or four steps per page: penciling, lettering, inking, coloring.

Choose your paper. If you plan on painting, or erasing a lot, you may want to consider using Bristol board or some other thick medium. Start by penciling the entire page. Draw lightly and erase with a good eraser. Be as sketchy or precise as you want. You should pencil in the text for each panel as well. Once you're happy with the penciling, begin the inking phase. Use a good black pen or marker. Have different tips for different line widths. An alternative method is brush and ink, which is more challenging, but enables a different style. Good use of inking can make your drawings seem dimensional and bold.

Ink the lettering. If you don't feel confident lettering yourself, you may want to get someone who is, or consider using a computer for the type. Erase any stray pencil lines. Inking can be touched up with white paint, even white white-out.

Color your artwork. Any medium can be used for color reproduction. Watercolor paint, acrylic paint, art markers, color pencil, etc. Increasingly artists are turning to the computer for coloring their work. Get a good PRACTICE! reference for painting, color theory, and any computer software/hardware you plan on using.

And Print, bind, and distribute.

Student Example(s):

Questions / Activities / Exercises.

⁷⁰Wikihow contributors. "How to Create a Graphic Novel." *Wikihow*. 29 March 2019. Web. 22 June 2019. <https://www.wikihow.com/Create-a-Graphic-Novel>. Text available under Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0).

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8.8: Romance



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Alt Text: The word "romance" written into stone

Romance novels⁷¹ are a very popular genre in publishing. A good romance novel can spawn a whole series of novels with similar characters and settings. You may decide to write romance novels as a writerly challenge, or to try your hand at the genre. Start by coming up with fun, engaging ideas for the romance novel. Then, write the novel with your audience in mind. Revise and edit the novel when it's done so it is appealing to readers of romance.

Brainstorming:

Use a real-life romantic experience as inspiration. Draw from your own romantic experiences in life and adapt them for your novel. Fictionalize a chance encounter you had on vacation or a special moment you experienced with your partner. Use past romantic relationships as raw material for your novel.

- For example, you may take a passionate but doomed relationship in your past and change around real-life names to fictionalize it. You may also change the setting or small details to make the situation more dramatic.
- You can also use the real-life romances of others around you as inspiration. Maybe you have a friend who is in a stormy romance. Or perhaps you have a sibling who had a passionate relationship in the past.

Use romantic movies or television shows as inspiration. You can also reference romantic movies or tv shows that you enjoy watching. Make your own version of a romantic movie that you like. Reimagine a romance on a tv show with characters that you create or in a different setting.

- You can also use romantic books and songs as inspiration for your romance novel.

Create an engaging main character. Have a main character that is relatable and likeable for readers. The main character, who is usually also the narrator, should be welcoming and accessible to your audience. They should feel unique and interesting to your reader.

- For example, you may have a main character who is a high-profile criminal lawyer by day, and a single woman struggling to meet someone on her level at night. Or you may have a main character who is left by her partner and copes by going back to her hometown.

Focus on a particular type of romance novel. There are many different types of romance novels, from historical romance to young adult romance to paranormal romance. Decide which type you'd like to write. Choose a type that fits your story idea so you can cater to your audience.

- For example, if you are writing a romance set in 1930s West Virginia or during WWI, you are writing historical romance. If you are writing about a romance between a ghost and a woman, you are writing paranormal romance.

Read examples of romance novels. Get a better sense of the genre by reading romance novels that are considered successful and well done.



November Write More reminder

"240/365 National Novel Writing Month begins" by the girl who owns the world is licensed under [CC BY-NC 2.0](#)

Alt Text: Writing of ideas in journal for novel

Writing the Novel:

Put your own spin on the romance formula. In romance, there is a tried and true formula: girl meets boy, girl loses boy, girl gets boy. To make your romance novels stand out, put your own spin or approach on the formula so your story feels fresh and engaging. You may have the girl meet a girl, or a boy meet a boy, which would fit in the queer romance genre. Or you may have the girl meet a boy in another universe or time period. Get creative and play around with the formula.

- You could also have the girl be of a certain race or background that clashes with the boy she falls for. Or the girl could be from a family that does not get along with the boy's family.

Have a strong setting. Setting is a key element in a successful romance novel. The setting should be front and center throughout the story. It should dictate how the characters speak, how they interact, and how they see the world of the story.

- For example, you may set the novel in modern-day Savannah, Georgia, where the characters have Southern accents and the heat is unbearable in the summer. Or you may set the novel in a naval vessel in the ocean, where the characters are nauseous from seasickness and bad weather.

Create a central conflict. Romance readers love a detailed, major conflict that drives the story forward. The conflict should be believable and prevent the main character and the love interest from being together. The conflict should also be clear and easy for the reader to follow.

- For example, you may have a central conflict where the main character has to choose between a high stakes criminal case and her budding romance with her next-door neighbor. Or you may have a conflict where the main character's illness gets in the way of uniting with her true love.

Consider including sex scenes. Not all romance novels need to have sex scenes. If you do decide to include sex scenes in your novel, make them emotional and vivid. Avoid graphic detail or mechanical descriptions of sex, unless that best describes it.

- For example, you may describe the setting of the sex scenes using sensory detail, such as how it smells, feels, sounds, or looks. Providing context for the sex scene can make it more emotional for the reader.

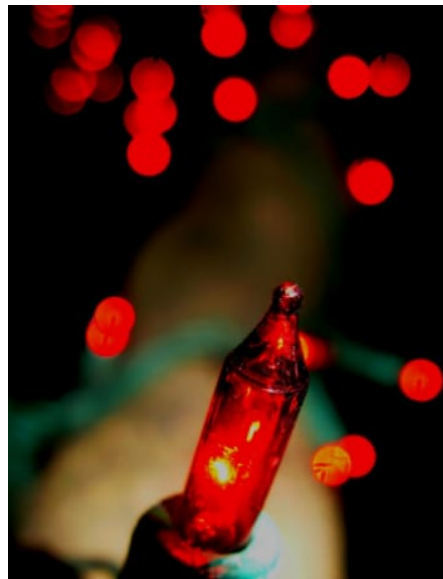
Avoid cliches. Romance writing is populated by many cliches, which are phrases that are so common they have lost meaning. If a phrase or line feels familiar to you, it's likely a cliché and to be avoided. Create unique descriptions instead that feel specific to your characters.

- For example, rather than write, "he was tall, dark, and handsome," you may write, "he was good looking in a stylish professor kind of way."

Wrap up the novel with a satisfying ending. A good romance novel will end on a variation of "happily ever after." Give the reader an ending that is satisfying and happy. Ultimately, your readers want to see your main character get the love they want.

- For example, maybe your main character and her love interest finally get together. Or perhaps your main character recovers from her illness long enough to see her love interest one last time.

Example: "The Red Light Reflected in Her Eyes" by Anonymous⁷²



"Red Light District" by Darwin Bell is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0.

Alt Text: Red lights

When I look into her eyes, I do not see my reflection. No one sees a reflection in her eyes. Her eyes consume all and reveal to others what they are at the core.

When I look deep into her eyes, am I really just a red light deep down? All of my soul, my essence, my body, my personality, the flaws, the perfections, the traits, the ambitions, the goals, the weak, the strong, the beautiful, and the ugly are represented not through my reflection, but through a red light.

I am not red, for I am a human being. Red is not my skin tone, red is not my name, red is not my face. Why red?

She does not tell me why, but only continues to stare at me with that gleamy, red glow. She must know what has happened to me within the past two weeks. I have fallen. There was a flight of stairs going up a mountain. I had tried my best to climb, I even had fun at certain points while doing so, but then I slipped on an ice patch and fell. I fell down to the second to last step.

I was still on the stairwell, but I had to nearly start all over. Not only did I have to start over, I still have to wait for the ice to melt.

It is cold where I am. There isn't any chance of the ice melting soon. Red will keep me warm, but it cannot feed me, it cannot help me rest, it cannot satisfy my thirst. Red will only keep me warm in this cold patch.

One may ask how I got to this cold patch and I can tell them it was actually an accident. I had been walking along my usual trail in the park, when a young girl ran up to me.

"There is a new trail opened west of here!" The girl shouted.

I had seen the child before, yet she had never spoke to me and I had never spoken to her. Before I had a chance to ask her if it was worth the trip, she had ran off, only leaving me with the curiosity and desire to hike the trail. I accepted the challenge and began my trek. At the bottom of the stairs, I realized this would be a difficult journey and not one I could do within a day nor a week. I could possibly climb every step over the course of one month--maybe two.

Now here I am. It is midnight. I am cold, waiting for the ice patch to melt so I may continue my journey to the top of the stairs. I do not know whether I am sleeping or if I am awake, but this beautiful woman appeared to me. She had gradually materialized at such a steady pace that I did not notice her as I adjusted to my surroundings. It was only when she spoke did I first notice her.

"Why do you make yourself suffer waiting for the ice to melt? Why don't you leave and come back in the summer when the ice is gone and you have the energy to move on?" She asked.

This had not occurred to me. Perhaps she was right. She moved closer towards me and I saw the reflection in her eyes. It was not me, nor the stairs. It was a red light. Then my senses came together and I had the logic I had sought after this whole time.

She is right. I shouldn't be waiting here. I am being blinded by impulses and the willpower to do what I desire most without thinking first. With that, I stand up, walk over to the woman, and kiss her. As I kiss her, she disappears.

I wake up the next morning feeling revived and healthier. The ice has not melted a single drop since last night. I stand up, grab my bag, and turn back the way I came. I head down the stairs, knowing that one day I will return. It may be weeks or months from now, but I will reach my way to the top.

Student Example(s):

Questions / Activities / Exercises.

⁷¹Wikihow contributors. "How to Write Romance Novels." Wikihow. 29 March 2019. Web. 22 June 2019. <http://www.wikihow.com/Write-Romance-Novels>. Text available under Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0).

⁷²Discovered on the *Anonymous Authors Fandom* web site: https://anonymous-authors.fandom.com/wiki/The_Red_Light_Reflected_in_Her_Eyes Their community content is available under [CC-BY-SA](#) unless otherwise noted.

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8.9: How to get published



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Alt Text: Stack of books

- **Step 1:**⁷³ Decide if you want an agent, whether you want to self-publish, or if you are going to start a blog and post your writing under a Creative Commons License in order to publish to the creative commons global network: [Creative Commons.com](https://creativecommons.org) [network.creativecommons.org]
- **Step 2:** Do research on what has already been written in the genre you wish to publish in. Use Amazon and Google to see if your topic has been covered. Check those sites for possible titles you might use.

Editor's Note:

How did I write and publish a children's book (called Foo Foo Fancypants)? Well, I read other children's books, noticed types of words used and length of sentences and considered age group (what would they find interesting and fun?), found images to accompany story line (using Creative Commons on Flickr or could have drawn my own). I did the same with the story about my breast reduction surgery (The Big-Boobed Bridesmaid). When I was recuperating, I went to Amazon to download a book on the topic and there weren't any. So, I decided to journal about my experience and self-publish.

When it comes to finding an agent versus self-publishing or going the Creative Commons route, here are few things to consider. If it's important to you to get your writing out to a massive group of people, then finding an agent will have the biggest impact. They will probably market for you, etc. It's a harder path to take, but it's more fruitful in the long run if you can find an agent and/or publishing company who will "sell you" and your book for you.

If you want to have a lot of control over everything, the self-publishing route and/or using a Creative Commons license is your best bet. Using the Independent Publishing Service through Amazon – via createspace.com – allows a writer more royalty money and total control over the end product. Granted,

your book may not get to the masses like if you were to use an agent/publishing company, but that's the "price" one pays for doing their own thing.

If you are already a blogger, and like to write a variety of things, and want your name OUT THERE more than you want money in your pocket, then the Creative Commons route is right up your alley. You could simply keep a blog, write and post an assortment

of genres and lengths of literature, and then ask that if anyone comes across those items and wants to use them in their OER (open-source) textbooks or classrooms, that they use a Creative Commons license like the one you've seen in this book – you can choose to allow the person to use your piece of writing if they give you credit, you can choose the noncommercial license so they can't make money off of it, and you can choose non-derivative, too, which means they cannot change the writing either.

Agents and Publishing Companies:⁷⁴

There are hordes of aspiring writers out there, besides the well- established ones.

Many people believe a literary agent will help with the publishing process. It can be tricky to find the one that is right for you, but agents know about the business, have contacts in the business, would know what publishers would be most receptive of your work, and generally they can get a better contract than you would be able to negotiate yourself. Many new authors do not know how much money they should get up front, how royalties work, or many other aspects of the business. Agents take care of this for you. Writer Beware: look for agents that will disclose their satisfied clients list. If they are not willing to disclose names, they could very well be a fly-by-night agency. When in doubt, check your favorite author's books for the agency they use, or check with the A.A.R. (Association of Author's Representatives.)

It should also be noted that many of the larger publishing companies have what is called an "open call" for unpublished authors. Many of these even accept submissions from authors without agents. Be aware, however, that most of these companies have very strict guidelines of how a manuscript should look when submitted. Check with your favorite publisher's website to see if they have an open call.



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Alt text: Books on a self

Tips for getting published with a publishing company:⁷⁵

- First, identify the publisher that is right for your work. Make a list of books that are similar to yours and note their publishers. If four out of five books you chose are from the same publishing house, your best bet is to start there.
- Second, consult the publisher's website for submission guidelines. Follow those instructions as carefully as possible; that will show editors you are professional and serious about your craft. Get hold of a guide for information on how to write a cover letter, query, and format your manuscript. (Note: Many publishers do not accept unsolicited manuscripts, especially novels. They may instead ask for a query. Often publishers do not accept unsolicited queries either. If that is the case, you need an agent to submit to that house. Unfortunately, finding an agent can be as tough as finding a publisher.)
- Third, wait. This step can be one of the most frustrating to the author and the urge to submit to multiple publishing houses may arise but be careful. When you consult the publisher's website pay attention to their policy on simultaneous and exclusive

submissions. Not doing so can be harmful to your long future with a publishing house. Fortunately, publishers are becoming more accepting of simultaneous submissions as they realize it can take six months or longer for them to respond to an author. Publishing houses that do accept simultaneous submissions are a blessing to authors and should not be abused. Do not submit to anywhere that your work is not appropriate. Doing so is a waste of your money and it encourages publishers to not accept simultaneous or unsolicited submissions.

- Fourth, you will most likely get rejected. It's part of being a writer and should be viewed as an accomplishment and opportunity to refine your work. (Note: Most rejected submissions receive a form letter. If an editor takes the time to comment specifically on your submission, that is a major accomplishment.)
- Fifth, don't give up.

Tips for getting published without a publishing company:⁷⁶

- Sign up for a service that offers independent publishing, like Amazon's Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP) = [KDP](https://kdp.amazon.com) [kdp.amazon.com] It's the service used by Sybil to publish this textbook on paper.
 - Since this book is OER, she doesn't take royalties, but KDP offers 30-70% royalties.
- Use their templates and cover makers once you have a final draft you want published.
- Price your book and link a banking account to KDP in order to receive your royalty "checks."
- Market on your own using social media, etc. Sybil has a Facebook page for her books, both OER and non-OER ones.
- Reach out to others who self-publish (like Sybil) for advice.
- Keep writing!

"Creativity itself doesn't care at all about results - the only thing it craves is the process. Learn to love the process and let whatever happens next happen, without fussing too much about it. Work like a monk, or a mule, or some other representative metaphor for diligence. Love the work. Destiny will do what it wants with you, regardless." – Elizabeth Gilbert

⁷³This information comes from Sybil Priebe's experiences. Text available under Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0).

⁷⁴"Creative Writing/Novels." *Wikibooks, The Free Textbook Project*. 4 Mar 2011, 19:49 UTC. 16 Nov 2016, 21:26 <<https://en.wikibooks.org/w/index.php...&oldid=2064408>>. Text is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License.

⁷⁵"Creative Writing/Publication." *Wikibooks, The Free Textbook Project*. 20 Aug 2009, 22:22 UTC. 9 Nov 2016, 20:19 <<https://en.wikibooks.org/w/index.php...&oldid=1613374>>. Text is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License.

⁷⁶More information from Sybil's brain.

"Someone who wants to write should make an effort to write a little something every day. Writing in this sense is the same as athletes who practice a sport every day to keep their skills honed."

---Anita Desai

9: ASSIGNMENT AND PROJECT IDEAS



Note to students:⁷⁷ Your teacher(s) may not use any of the following projects and assignments, so just pay attention in class as to which of these may be assigned to you.

9.1: More Practice

9.2: 30 Reading Response Activities

9.3: Potential Course Design

9.4: Final Exercises

⁷⁷Another note to whom it may concern: These exercises, and any assignments found in this textbook, are all about fulfilling the goal of practicing writing anything in order to challenge ourselves AND to see what we excel in, too.

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9.1: More Practice

There are already PRACTICE PROJECTS listed at the end of each chapter, and those are pretty awesome, as is, BUT if those projects don't float the boat of whoever is teaching the course, this list might help.

Poetry Projects.

- Write a very, very silly poem about love. Or hate. Rhyme a lot.
- Create a list of as many new clichés as you can. “Give her the onion,” “quiet like a chipmunk,” “work like hens,” etc. Then, create a poem using the cliché form as your structure.
- Write a poem that makes the audience cry.

Flash Fiction Projects.

- Pulling Over for a Siren. Compose a 250-word flash fiction piece in which you describe a lake, a tree, or a living room from the perspective of one of the following people:
 - Someone who has just committed a violent crime.
 - Someone who has just been told he or she has one year to live.
 - Someone who has just been unfaithful to his or her lover.
 - Describe the lake or tree or room almost exclusively in concrete language; do not allow the narrator to talk about how he or she feels, or what he or she thinks about the scene.
 - And: DO NOT MENTION THE BAD NEWS, THE CRIME, OR THE INFIDELITY.
- The Most Amazing Thing Was the Cheese. Write a story whose first line is: “The most amazing thing was the cheese.”
- Write a short story which is one sentence long, but at least 200 words in length.
- Write a story that doesn't have one sentence over 10 words in length.
- Write a story about how the world began whether you believe in creationism or evolution, but it has to be 200-250 words in length.

Fiction Projects.

- Write a story with a plot that runs backward in time.
- Write a story which takes place in a single location, has almost no action, and which involves, at most, four characters. You might position your characters around a table, in a bed, in two chairs, at a window, etc. From a third-person/omniscient point-of-view, create a plot and resolution, etc. Do not use dialogue.
- In the Unendurable Snow. Make a list of people you strongly dislike. These can be people you personally know very well, or mere acquaintances. Choose one person from your list and then do the following:
 - Write a short story in which the person you've just described is the protagonist-and a sympathetic character. (You can use third or first person point-of-view.) There can be (and probably should be) some ambiguity in this character, but he/she should be mostly sympathetic. You should also make this character believable, complex, and distinct. (Note: a “sympathetic character” in fiction is one whom the reader regards favorable; one that evokes sympathy, admiration, or at least empathetic understanding.)
- Paws. Imagine that you're a particular animal. Taking the perspective of this creature, and assuming that it is capable of writing, compose a short story in which you describe the world around you. You will be experiencing your environment in an entirely sensory way, and your writing should therefore be full of striking physical detail and metaphor. (For instance, from the point of view of a deer, a hunter's rifle would be “a branch that barks”?)
- Write a story about yourself as a fictional character. Change things about yourself if you'd like and make up new characteristics for your friends and life up to this point. Maybe you wanted to grow up in the 70s?

Drama Projects.

- Write a 10min play where every character has a secret, but they never say what it is. The readers have to speculate.

- Write a 10 min play where every character is secretly evil, but they come across as good people.
- Write an inner monologue you have had.
- Write the inner monologue of someone who you don't know but have seen recently on campus or around town.
- Create the dialogue of a fake news cast. Be hilarious or be serious or be both.
- Create dialogue between two friends where each one wants something from the other, but never says so. Maybe Person A wants to buy a necklace and the clerk, Person B, wants to ask Person A out?

Nonfiction Projects.

- Write a story with a plot that runs backward in time.
- Write a short story with yourself as the main character. Use the third person point-of-view.
- The Child is Father to the Man: Think back to your childhood and recall some object you were fond of or intrigued by: some new shoes, your mother's jewelry, a Ferris wheel, and abandoned house, a neighbor's hostile cat, your father's buzzsaw, etc. etc.
 - Now write a short prose piece about this object from the perspective of yourself when you were a child. Describe and reflect upon the object just as you did years before, and try not to let your adult perceptions, inhibitions, and embarrassments intrude. Allow yourself to say odd, even nonsensical things. AVOID CUTENESS AND CLICHÉ COMMENTS OR COMPARISONS.
- Write a fake gossip column about real celebrities.
- Show and Tell: Write three different stories about the same person in your life. These stories should show us the type of person they are.

Alternative Style.

- Hyperactive: Explore some hypertext literary sites and works on the web. Read some hypertext stories and poems, and explore around also for theory about, and criticism of, such works. Then write your own hypertext poem or story, using resources unique to electronic environments (especially hypertext links, though you might also explore use of moving text, graphics, and sound.) Try any and all programs, software, or skills you might have, including ability to use straight HTML.
- Creative Slides: Create a PowerPoint or Google Slides that tells a story but only uses punctuation.
- Go Prezi Crazy! Create a funky Prezi (prezi.com) that reads like a fractured story.
- Grammar B: Write a story (fiction or nonfiction) that uses small words - six (6) letters or less. Then write that same story using larger words. Beyond "a," and "the," words must be 6 letters or more. You can go back and translate a story you've already written for the course into these two stories.
- Write anything that breaks rules. Before you begin, list the rules you will break.

Multi-modal, Multi-genre, Multi-vocal projects.

- Multimodal: Take any mini-project you've completed for this class and add a **visual** component as well as an **audio** component. We can discuss in-class how this may be accomplished.
- Multi-Genre: Take any mini-project you've completed for this class and add two more genres to it, to emphasize any part of it. We can discuss in class how this may be accomplished.
- Another Multi-Genre: Take one of the non-drama mini-projects you've written and make it into a play and then create an ad and poster for the play, as if it was going to be produced on campus.
- Multi-Vocal: Grab a classmate. Pick a topic to write on. Write separately, and then piece your work together with headers or connecting parts that use "we" etc.
- Photo Essay. Text plus visual = multimodal. People to look up are Walker Evans and James Agee (compare a photo depicting "his lunchtime" versus "my lunchtime, for example).

9.2: 30 Reading Response Activities

These are activities that could be assigned after students have had to read something... they are useful for writing classes beyond creative writing.

OPTION 1: Flickr/Pixlr Image Creation

Idea: This activity visualizes the reading. You will find an image that connects to the quote/statement you find most interesting in the chapter you just read. Using the Creative Commons area of Flickr.com or Unsplash, you'll save the image and add text (or a quote) by using Pixlr.com. From there, you could upload the image to an LMS or insert it into a document to be handed in. Or, hell, maybe you'll just email it to whoever needs to see it.

OPTION 2: Facebook Status(es)

Idea: You will create a Facebook status of the topic or person in the reading. Perhaps there will be comments to that status by other people in the reading.

OPTION 3: Top Ten

Idea: You would rank something in the reading for class. If the chapter is about blogs, maybe you would rank the top ten blogs you might read.

OPTION 4: Twitter Sitter

Idea: In 280 characters or less, you will sum up what you read.

OPTION 5: Text Type-Up

Idea: You might learn the best through repetition, and yet don't want to mark up your paper textbooks. So, this activity asks you to type (or write) up a piece of the reading you'd like to respond to. After typing or writing up the piece, you can then circle things you don't understand or really find interesting.

OPTION 6: Animoto Video Trailer

Idea: Just like how movies have previews, maybe discussions should too? This activity asks you to create a trailer or preview of the upcoming discussion by reading and then putting related images and text into Animoto.com. Their 30-second videos are free and easy to use. From there, you could upload the URL to an LMS to be viewed in class. {Animoto.com}

OPTION 7: Prezi/PPT

Idea: In order for you to prep for the upcoming discussion of the reading, you should create parts of the possible discussion by putting together a piece such as a PowerPoint slide (or slides) or Prezi presentation. You could then upload those Prezis/PPTs to a specific area in the LMS in order for the instructor to pop them up on the big screen in class.

OPTION 8: Visual Definition

Idea: Many of us naturally increase our vocabulary by reading, so this activity asks you to pick a specific number of words from the chapter to create visual definitions of. Each slide = new word made visual with images, stories, quotes from the reading, definitions, etc.

OPTION 9: Create a Quiz

Idea: In order to create a quality quiz, you need to know the material. So, you should create quizzes from everything you read (if you have time); the quiz or quizzes could contain multiple-choice questions, T/F, and even short answer questions. The quizzes, then, could be exchanged with classmates?

OPTION 10: The Crossword Puzzle

Idea: You would use an online crossword puzzle-making site to create a crossword related to the reading material. {[Puzzle maker](#) [puzzle-maker.com]⁷⁸ or some other web site?}

OPTION 11: (Fake) Interview

Idea: You could either interview someone about what you've just read, or you could create a document which shows a fake interview with the author about the piece. Sometimes, creating fake content is just as difficult as "real" content.

OPTION 12: Survey the Masses

Idea: After you read, you could conduct a survey of those around you (f2f or email or Facebook) about the topic(s) covered in the piece.

OPTION 13: Weird Poetry

Idea: After reading, you could reconstruct parts of the text into chunks. Slices of the text, fragments, put into poetic bite size bits.

OPTION 14: Dear Author

Idea: You could write an actual letter to the author of the piece.

OPTION 15: Jeopardy

Idea: While reading, create Jeopardy questions or maybe a whole game with points assigned (200 level questions versus 400 level questions). You could play the game with classmate in or out of class together.

OPTION 16: Do you know your ABCs?

Idea: Use all 26 letters to find things in the reading that pertain to each letter. (There may be an example of this at the end of this section?)

OPTION 17: The 5x5

Idea: Whatever you are reading, find 5 quotes and then 5 terms and create a story out of them.

OPTION 18: Mad Libs

Idea: You could create a mad lib, or a few, (Google that term if you've never used a Mad Lib before) based on the reading.

OPTION 19: The Kevin Bacon-ator

Idea: Connect two unlike things (genres, chapters, topics, authors, etc.) with the 6 (or is it 7) Steps to Kevin Bacon idea.

OPTION 20: Fake Book Citations

Idea: While reading, you could create fake book citations for books that would relate to the material in a serious or fun way.

OPTION 21: Factoid/Something Cool

Idea: Search the text for someone or something. From there, you could find something cool or some factoid about that topic. Ex: If you are reading about World War II, you could look online for something interesting about the fashions of the time or what people drove (if you are into fashion/cars, for example).

OPTION 22: Artistic Summary/Pictionary

Idea: Draw out what happened in the reading. It could lead into a game of Pictionary with classmates.

OPTION 23: Multi-Genre

Idea: Find multiple genres that connect to the topic(s)/theme(s) in the reading or chapter. Ex: Finding a cartoon and poem and meme about BLOGS.

OPTION 24: The Comic Strip

Idea: Using www.makebeliefscomix.com⁷⁹ (or paper & pen), you could create a comic strip based on a theme or some dialogue that occurs in the reading. This will add a bit of humor to any subject.

OPTION 25: Dear Abby Advice

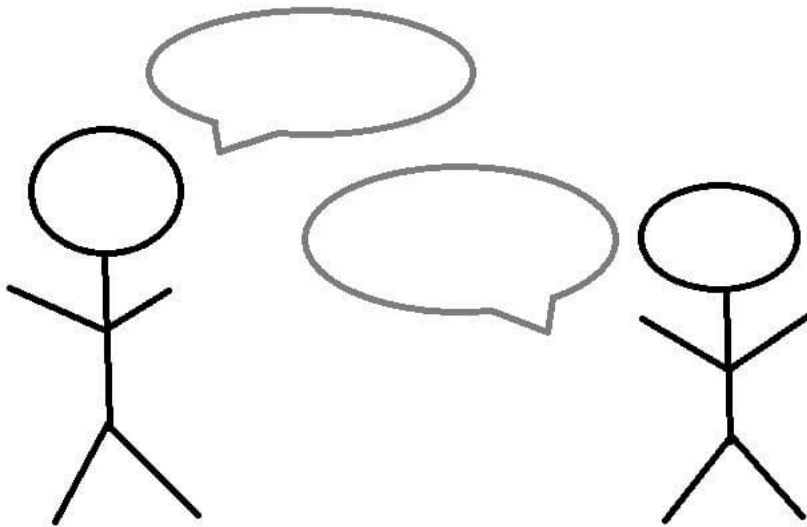
Idea: Mimic a “Dear Abby” column that is related to the piece that you just read.

OPTION 26: Translation Nation

Idea: Take a paragraph from the reading. Translate it into how a politician would say it. THEN translate it into how a child or elderly person would say it.

OPTION 27: Teeny Tiny Talk

Idea: Find an image on Flickr.com of two or more people. Add bubbles for conversation using Pixlr.com. Connect what you read for class to the conversation. There is a low-tech sample image below. If you can draw, recreate this on paper with pen/pencil.



OPTION 28: Activity Exchange

Idea: Create your own post-reading activity. Exchange it with a classmate and complete theirs.

OPTION 29: Fake Ad

Idea: Create an ad for something sold in the chapter or reading.

OPTION 30: Timeline

Idea: Create a timeline of the reading.

Example 9.2.1

Option 16 example:

What if, as humans, we are the things being “read.” What nuggets would a person take away from reading me (Sybil/creator of this book)?

“Sybil: An Alphabetical Journey to the Person I Have Become.”

A = Aquarius. "While Aquarians are generally sympathetic and compassionate, they like it when things go their own quirky way. Some might call their behavior eccentric (and they would be right), but when you consider that the Aquarian's heart is truly in the right place, a few oddities should be overlooked." [www.astrology.com]

B = Beck. Blasphemy. Bicycles.

C = Classes Taught. Classes taught: (middle-school) student-taught 8th grade English at the West Fargo Middle School; (high school) taught Freshmen English, Junior English, Senior English, and Publications (yearbook/newspaper) at Battle Lake High School; (university) taught College Composition I: English 110 & College Composition II: English 120 at NDSU; (community colleges) taught Professional Communications and Fundamentals of English at Aakers Business College; taught College Composition I: English 110 at Northwest Tech in Detroit Lakes; (currently) Technical Communications: English 105, College Composition I: English 110, College Composition II: English 120, World Masterpieces: English 240, and Intro to Creative Writing: English 211.

D = Drafting and Design. "D'oh!" – Homer Simpson.

E = Ellen DeGeneres. "Today I'd like to talk about librarians. I don't know how many of them watch my show. If they do, they probably watch my show while reading or working on the Dewey Decimal System. They probably don't watch much TV at all. They just wait for the transcripts. If they do watch the show, they probably keep the sound turned down and put their fingers up to their mouths and say, "Shhhhhhhh" every time the audience laughs."

F = *Fahrenheit 451*. The f-bomb.

G = "Growth-seeking individual."⁸⁰

H = Hell. I joke about probably ending up in hell. "If you are going through hell, keep going." Winston Churchill said that.

I = Intolerant of lactose.

J = Joyce. It's the best "old lady name" ever. My sister and I use it as an expletive. Jeep.

K = Karma. "The total effect of a person's actions and conduct during the successive phases of the person's existence, regarded as determining the person's destiny." [Dictionary.com]

L = Lexicography. Lady Gaga.

M = Mark, my dad. Magazines. Marathons.

N = Numbers. 7. 3. 33. 47. First off, when I go places, and a tip is needed to be figured in, I like to round up to odd numbers. I love spending \$17, for example. I feel like it's good luck. Fourteen dollars? Na.

O = I am an optimist, and I am the oldest of four.

P = Priebe. Project Runway. Paddleboarding. *Parks & Rec*.

Q = Quit. Quit worrying about my weight. Quit this. Quit that.

R = Raining days are the best. I love clouds and not having to squint. Plus, the smell is a bonus.

S = Shopping, *Sex & The City*, Sarah Jessica Parker, Shoes. Sushi. Sadie.

T = I used to be a tomboy, and I loved the sport of tennis.

U = Ungrading.

V = Volleyball. And Volkswagen.

W = Weblog. "Be the Blog: Myself as a Test Subject." Since throwing myself into the "blogosphere" in 2002, I've been blogging privately and publicly as well as used class blogs in my Composition/Literature courses. I've researched the pros and cons of blogging; dissecting student blogging has become my odd passion. I've happily annoyed other academics (and, yes, even non-academics) with my blogging knowledge/experience for quite some time, so why stop now? As an eternal optimist, I have a few recommendations for why students and teachers should jump on the blogging wagon.

X = Check mark. I like to make lists and check items off one at a time.

Y = Yoda.

Z = Zephyr, which is the western wind. I've been fascinated by meteorology for a long time. Looking at doppler radars and figuring out what will come to us from the west, from the Rockies.

⁷⁸In existence as of November 2021.

⁷⁹In existence as of November 2021.

⁸⁰The best compliment I've received from a colleague.

9.3: Potential Course Design

Week	Read	Create
1	Intro to Course	Orientation
2	Chapter 1: Intro	Activities & Exercises?
3	Chapter 2: Review of Elements	Activities & Exercises?
4	Chapter 3: Short Stories	Activities & Exercises & Practice
5	Chapter 4: Nonfiction	Activities & Exercises & Practice
6	Chapter 5: Poetry	Activities & Exercises & Practice
7	Chapter 6: Drama	Activities & Exercises & Practice
8	Chapter 7: Flash Fiction	Activities & Exercises & Practice
9	Chapter 8: Final Chapter	Activities & Exercises & Practice
10	Chapter 9: Final Chapter	
11	Chapter 9: Final Chapter	
12	Plan Final Project	Plan and Outline and Draft and Write
13	Final Project	Write
14	Final Project	Write
15	Final Project	Write

Week	Read	Create
16	Final Project	Write
F	Wrap Up	Submit and Redo Anything

Final Project Planning Document:

You might spend some bits of the semester working on a final project. This planning document will give you the tools you need to guide your work.

End Product

Place a checkmark next to the option you'd like to complete. You can change your mind at any point, but that does put more stress on yourself, so keep that in mind.

__Option 1: One Novella, 17,500 to 39,999 words long	__Option 2: One Mini-Novella (5,000-10,000 words) + one item from Option 3	__Option • Text • Portf • All 3 • 2 prc • TBA
__Option 4: 10-15 flash fiction stories within any of the Final Chapter specialties	__Option 5: 5-10 mediums-sized stories within any of the Final Chapter specialties	__Option

Brief Proposed Timeline

Fill out this proposed timeline outlining your plans for this final project:

- _____ - Phase 1 of Writing Process (Brainstorming & Outline) completed; I will _____.
- _____ - Phase 2 of Writing Process (Draft and Revision) completed. I will _____.
- _____ - Phases 3 and 4 (Proofreading/Editing/Submission) completed. I will _____.
- Please consider using a tutor or Grammarly/Hemingway App or a nerdy classmate.

Peer Review/workshop

On _____, you will share a draft of your work [online]. My draft will include _____. I will offer WWW/TAG feedback to my peers. And, of course, I will chat with Sybil via email or over the phone/Zoom if I want to chat and get additional feedback at any point.

Sharing Your Work

You should consider publishing your work to the web or in a future edition of this book. The audience for your work shouldn't just

be Sybil or the members of our class, but rather the public, your friends, and your family.

I Promise

I promise to trust myself, my classmates, and to do as best I can on this project. I am capable, creative, and willing to engage with the material necessary to complete this project. Initial here: _____

Textbook tweak:

Goal: **Imagine a textbook written by students and for students!** What if we threw out any textbook for this class! What could the textbook look like with total student control? Create a chapter for that sort of textbook that doesn't exist yet.

Create a video, slide presentation, or infographic (or choose another medium) in which you create a student-friendly chapter for an imaginary textbook. At a minimum, the project will include:

- A new chapter.
- An accompanied visual aid.
- Facts.

STEPS:

Step 1: Brainstorm what you either think is missing from the current textbook for this class and compose that chapter OR ask yourself what current chapter needs to be completely tweaked and revise that one heavily.

- Feel free to be silly or cuss or use stories to talk about the genre.

Step 2: Compose the chapter with at least one visual aid (chart, meme, picture) that is openly licensed (possible sites to check out: Unsplash, Shutterstock, Getty Images, Pexels, Freepik, etc.).

Step 3: Double-check all facts and information you use. Cite information that doesn't come from your head (and/or use footnotes).

Step 4: Submit a final draft before the deadline and self-assess your project.

More brainstorming...

- Should there be histories in each chapter of each genre?
- Should there be a chapter on note-taking?
- Are ALL the genres and strategies for creative writing covered? What about MYSTERY?

Portfolio:

You will create a portfolio with the following pieces:

The Beginning:

- Cover Letter to Reader of what to expect in the portfolio.
 - Write a letter to the reader of your portfolio in which you provide a constructive analysis of your progress since the beginning of the semester. This reflective letter should address the following questions at some point:
 - In what area(s) have you progressed the most this semester?
 - Which piece of work this semester means the most to you & why?
 - Which piece of work challenged you the most & why?
 - How would you characterize your experiences as a reader this semester, both of professional pieces and student writing? Have you improved as a reader & critic?
 - What more would you have liked to accomplish in this class?

- What did you revise in the two projects that were completed earlier in the semester?
- Do you feel your Final Grade will reflect your effort and ability in this class?
- Table of Contents.
 - Label each piece with the date of last revision, genre, title, strength(s) of piece, and weakness(es) of the piece.

Body:

- **Low-Fat Fiction!**
 - Take one of your already completed flash fiction or fiction or nonfiction stories and shorten it by half. Please put the original and revised version in the portfolio.
- **Fiction on Steroids!**
 - Take one of your already completed flash fiction or fiction or nonfiction stories and develop it to three times its original length. Please put the original and revised version in the portfolio.
- **Jazzing Up the Juice!**
 - Choose one of your already “completed” projects and sort through the language and words you used. Switch up 30% of the words with whatever odd, wild, and surprising words that come to mind. With the help of a thesaurus, revise the words (any or all of the main nouns, verbs, and adjectives) to make it new and more vivid or imaginative. You might arbitrarily choose a single page from a thesaurus and force yourself to use words only from that page, even if they make little, at times, logical sense. You could switch “happy” words with “sad” ones and vice versa. Please put the original and new piece in the portfolio.
- **Create Something New!** Go back and choose any genre/topic you loved and create a new story/poem just for this portfolio.

One extra thing that you feel completes the picture of your development this year as a creative writer.

9.4: Final Exercises

Exercise 1: Ugly.

Create something ugly. Take a selfie with it and show it to your class/classmates/teacher. Then try to explain the ugly thing to us.

Exercise 2: Artist's statement.

Create an artist's statement. Use the following questions when writing about your own work throughout this semester...

- What do you want to say about your work?
- What's the most important thing you have learned? What insights have you gained into the practice and art of creative writing?
- What do you wish you had learned that you didn't?
- Have your goals as a writer changed? What would you write if you had the time and talent to write anything? Will you?
- What have you learned about your writing habits?
- Do you see yourself as part of a writing community? Do you prefer to work in isolation, focusing on the work, and reading?
- What's the most important thing you learned about getting and giving feedback about work in progress?
- What techniques, authors, or exercises have been most useful to you?
- What authors do you want to read now? Has that changed since the beginning of the semester? Why? Do you have writer role models?
- What's your best piece from the semester?

Exercise 3:

What would be the most creative way to reflect upon a creative writing semester? Whatever you think that might look like, do that for this exercise.

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ambrose bierce

3.3: Ambrose Bierce (1842–circa 1914)

autonumheader:yes2

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1.2: Literary Techniques

5: Poetry

5.1: Poetry

5.2: William Carlos Williams (1883 - 1963)

5.3: Emily Dickinson (1830 - 1886)

5.4: e.e. cummings (1894 - 1962)

5.5: Langston Hughes (1902 - 1967)

5.6: Poetry Exercises

C

Coalinga College

*Spinning a Yarn: Creative Writing for the Soul
(C-ID ENGL 200)*

creative writing

*Spinning a Yarn: Creative Writing for the Soul
(C-ID ENGL 200)*

E

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Emily Dickinson

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english

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GLOSSARY

S

Sample Word 1 | Sample Definition 1

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