The Worry Free Writer

The Worry Free Writer

Taking the stress out of academic writing.

DR. KAREN PALMER

PRESS BOOKS
CAMP VERDE, AZ

Contents

Part VIII. Writing About Creative Non-Fiction: The Essay

Message from the Author

Hello!

I have been teaching composition for over twenty years, and what I have found is that, for many students, taking a composition course causes anxiety because they believe that they are just not good at writing. However, the truth is that, while some people do have a natural ability to express themselves, becoming a good writer simply takes practice. It has been a privilege to witness hundreds (perhaps even thousands) of students become better writers as they follow the guidelines I will share in this text.

My goal is to help you gain confidence in your own writing ability by teaching you a simple ***Writing Formula*** *that you can use to write anything, from a blog post to a doctoral dissertation! The Writing Formula will help you to create better organized, more effective papers with much less time and stress. Once you have learned this formula, you'll be able to add your own style to your writing and adapt it to any assignment given to you.*

In addition to the Writing Formula, you will also learn the ***writing process****, which includes brainstorming, outlining, drafting, revision, editing, and publishing. As you work through this text, you will practice using the Writing Formula as I take you through the steps of the writing process three times. You'll write an analysis, an evaluation, and an argument–three of the most common types of writing assignments you might see in your time as a student. In addition, you'll find helpful sections on common grammar issues and lessons on both MLA and APA formatting. Like the many students who have gone before, I know that the skills you learn here will help you to become a better and more confident writer.*

Wishing you much success!

Dr. Karen Palmer

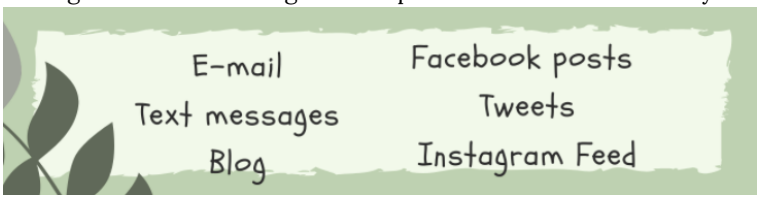
PART I

GETTING STARTED

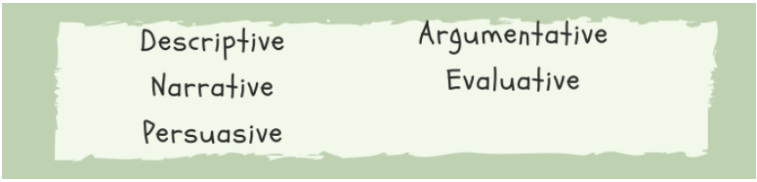
1. Kinds of Writing

Take a minute to think about all the different kinds of writing that there are in the world. Jot down a few that come to mind. If you're like most of my students, your initial list might look something like this:

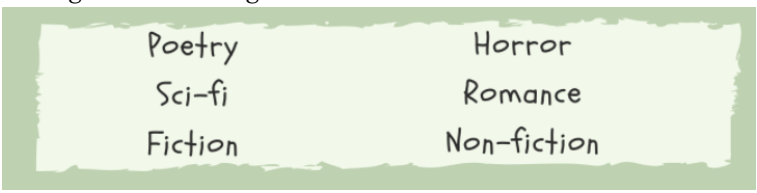
You might have been a little more creative and thought of some of the digital kinds of writing that are prevalent in our world today:



Some students name types of writing, like narrative and descriptive, that they remember from high school...



...and genres of writing.



As they dig deeper, I ask students to think about kinds of writing they see (and even WEAR) every day.

Everywhere we go, we see writing. It's an integral part of our world. So, doesn't it make sense to learn how to write well?

(*"Kinds of Writing" images and content created by Dr. Karen Palmer and licensed under CC-BY NC SA license.*)

2. Introduction to Rhetoric

Every single type of writing has three things in common. Can you guess what they are? It might help to think of an example.

Take a look at this shopping list. Think about these questions:
Why was the list written? Who wrote it? Who is going shopping?
What might make the list successful or unsuccessful?

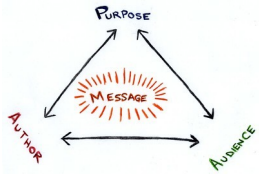
"Shopping List" licensed under CC-BY 4.0

Our answer to the first question is very simple–the list was written because it's time to replenish the groceries in this refrigerator! That is the **purpose** of the list. The second question is a little more difficult to answer because we are not privy to that information. However, we can assume the **author** is the person who noticed that the items on the list were running low and decided that they needed to be replenished. The third question is where things get interesting. Is the person who wrote the list the person who will

be doing the shopping? How does that **audience** impact the answer to the last question on our list?

Let's imagine that a mother is the **author** of this list and take just one item on this list–cheese–as an example. Imagine the mother knows that she needs cheese slices to make sandwiches this week–that is her **purpose** is including cheese on this list. But it's the **audience** that will determine if the list in this form will accomplish its purpose! If she is the one shopping, all she has to write on the shopping list is cheese because she knows exactly what kind of cheese she needs. But, what if she's sending her teenage daughter or her husband to the store for her? She will need to be a lot more specific than just cheese. Her daughter, who loves quesadillas, might come home with shredded cheese. Or her husband, who loves specialty cheeses might come home with a hunk of Gouda. As we look at the items on this list, it's easy to see that the audience matters! If the audience doesn't understand the message of the list, the purpose will not be accomplished. The poor mother will have to go back to the store…or her children will have some really interesting sandwiches this week!

In fact, although all writing includes these three elements of purpose, author, and audience, effective writing must take all three carefully into consideration.



"Rhetorical Triangle" by Ted Major licensed under CC-BY 2.0.

Having a clear understanding of their purpose, audience, and even their own presence in their writing, is vital for effective communication. The art of effective communication is an ancient one. In fact, people have been studying how to communicate

effectively since the time of the ancient Greeks! The study of the art of communication is called Rhetoric.

Ancient Rhetoric

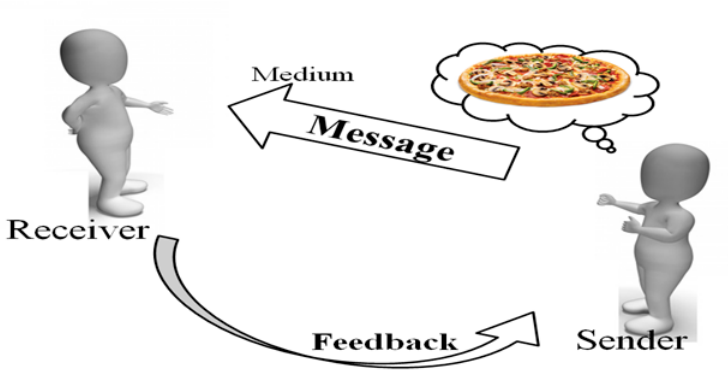
Aristotle taught his students how to practice the art of speaking well. He believed that, in order to be effective, a speaker must carefully consider the situation–the audience and the purpose, as well as the presentation of the speaker!

Many people have a negative connotation of rhetoric. They might think of smarmy politicians or false advertisements. Even though rhetoric has a bad reputation, it is just a tool. It depends on whose hands are using that tool whether it's something that's good. For example, imagine that you have a baseball bat. That baseball bat by itself is just a tool; it's just a piece of wood. If you put this tool in the hands of someone like Babe Ruth, and you have a legendary home run hitter. But if you put the exact same tool in the hands of a criminal, you have the potential to do harm. The baseball bat in itself is not good or evil; it's just a piece of wood.

Rhetoric is the same way. If a writer and uses rhetoric to make a point more clear to the audience, then it's being used for good. If a politician or a company uses rhetoric to confuse the audience and to convince them to believe a lie, then it's not being used for good. One example of a man who used rhetoric for immense good is Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Over his lifetime, he fought injustice using his words and made a lasting difference in our world. On the other hand, a man who used rhetoric for immense evil is Adolf Hitler. With his words, he murdered millions of innocent people and caused the deaths of many, soldiers and civilians alike, in World War II.

3. Purpose, Audience, and Author

When we talk about writing or communicating well in terms of rhetoric, what we mean is thinking carefully about not just what we are saying, but how we say it. Most people use rhetoric instinctively to communicate with different audiences. For example, imagine that you're telling a story about something that happened over Spring Break. Without even thinking about it, you will likely tell the story differently to your mom and to your best friend. You might emphasize different people or events or leave out the things that you know might interest one party but not the other (or that might get you in trouble). Remembering that rhetoric is something that you already use all the time helps to alleviate any stress about how to use it.



"*Communication Types*" *by zeeshan93 licensed* CC-SA 4.0

Purpose, of course, is what an argument hopes to achieve. Most communication occurs because something needs to happen. Writers must think about what they want their readers to do once

they've read the message. In our shopping list, for example, the purpose would be to go and buy the correct items on the list. If a person purchases a t-shirt with a logo or slogan, the purpose might be to show support for that brand. It's telling your audience—the people who look at your shirt—to think about you a certain way or to think about a topic a certain way. If someone wears a Yavapai College t-shirt, they are telling their audience that they go to YC and are proud of it! So, whenever you write, think about the purpose. What is the end result you are hoping to achieve? What do you want the reader to do with what you're telling them? The best writing will always have a clear purpose.

A writer's purpose is very often related to the **audience**. The audience consists of the specific person or group or groups of people for whom the message is intended. Knowing and understanding the audience is vital for successful communication and accomplishing the purpose. Look at our shopping list example again. The amount of detail the author might provide in the list depends greatly on the intended audience. In an academic setting, many students think of their instructor as their audience. However, while your instructor is grading your papers, the message or the purpose should not be related to your instructor. Your instructor is grading how effective you are at getting your message across to your intended audience–NOT to them. If you are not given a specific audience, or you aren't sure, a good solution is to write for an audience of your peers. This allows you to define your audience, which will help you to craft papers that are more interesting, not only for you to write and your audience to read, but also for your secondary audience–your instructor!

The final element of our rhetorical situation is the **author**. The position and the persona of the author may seem unimportant. However, the writer is always in the text, and how an author portrays him/herself can be very important in getting the message across. Let's go back to our shopping list example just one more time. It might seems that the persona of the author isn't very important in this instance–after all, it's just a list. But imagine that

the teenage daughter receives a text message with this list. Perhaps the there are some items spelled incorrectly. This might tell her that it was not her mother, but her little brother sending the list. Can you see how that might impact whether or not she chooses to go to the store to purchase those items? How you portray yourself in a text is important! After all, most writers want to be taken seriously. Even satirical writing usually has a clear purpose that the author hopes to portray. When you're writing an academic paper, you want to present yourself as a credible source of information. What does that mean? In part, it means using proper grammar and formatting and making sure your words are spelled correctly. Doing these things show the audience that you are serious about the topic and professional. Using good sources and citing them correctly, giving examples, and showing that you understand all sides of an issue tells readers that you are knowledgeable and that you can be trusted. If you don't portray yourself well in your writing, your message may not be taken seriously–even worse, it may turn your audience against you.

Can you see how these three elements–purpose, audience, and author–work together to create good communication? When writing, it's important to think about not just what you have to say, but how you say it. And how you say it should be determined by a careful examination of your purpose, audience, and the persona you want to project as a writer.

4. Finding Your Why

As this course begins, it's important to think about why you are taking it. Many studies across disciplines have shown that knowing your purpose, or your "why," can be an important key to success. Keeping your purpose in mind can help you keep going, even when you get overwhelmed or life just gets in the way.

Take a look at the photo below.

Photo Licensed CC0 Public Domain

Imagine that you are standing on the roof of the skyscraper on the

left. It's clearly snowing in the picture, but what you can't see is the wind gusting. The skyscraper is swaying slightly in the wind as you struggle to stand. Stretched out over the road to the roof of the skyscraper on the right of the road is a 2×4 board. The snow is accumulating on the board, and it shifts slightly as the two skyscrapers sway in the wind. Would you cross over to the other building by walking across that slippery, swaying board for any amount of money? How much would it take for you to risk your life?

Most of us would not take any amount of money to make that walk. BUT…imagine that on the other roof is a baby, all alone in the storm. The baby might be yours, a niece/nephew. Now, would you be willing to take the risk to save the baby?

This illustration shows the power of a good "why." Money or a good job is often offered as the reason for being in school. But that reason is usually not enough to get us through the really hard times. As a sophomore, one student I know got married, was in the emergency room multiple times and finally had emergency surgery, lost her dad to a massive heart attack, and moved with her spouse to a new apartment–all within the space of five months. And yet, she earned A's in all but one of her 6 courses that semester (yes–she was also taking 18 credit hours–the B was in Organic Chemistry). Most students will not have so many challenges in one semester, but life happens. Students get ill, lose family members, lose jobs, breakup with significant others, etc. If you want to make it through successfully, it's important to have a strong "why" that will keep you going, no matter what!

Daniel Henderson says, "You are unlike anyone who has ever lived. But that uniqueness isn't a virtue. It's a responsibility." Matthew Barnett argues that human beings are happiest when we are using our gifts to help others, echoing the words of Helen Keller, who says, "True happiness is not obtained through self-gratification, but through fidelity to a worthy purpose." You have a gift in you to give the world that NO ONE else has. Finding that purpose and hanging

on tight will help you weather the storms of life and achieve your goals.

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://oer.pressbooks.pub/theworryfreewriter/?p=25

SoulPancake. "What is Your Purpose in Life?" Youtube, May 11, 2016. https://youtu.be/mK66az43EOI.

Take a few minutes and think about your why. What is your purpose in life? You might start out by thinking about these questions:

1. What things am I really good at?
2. What am I really interested in?
3. Who do I really want to help?
4. What causes are most important to me?

As you answer these questions, don't quit with a simple answer.

Keep asking yourself "why?" until you find the answer that truly moves you to the core. Now, given your purpose in life, why is this course important? What would you say to yourself if you were in a moment where you felt like giving up to get yourself back on track?

Writing down your purpose is a powerful way to keep it in mind and help you stay strong in the midst of any challenges you may face. Whether you write your purpose on your mirror, make a vision board, or create affirmations in the form of "I am" statements, writing it down can help you stay focused on your purpose and your goals. A friend and mentor of mine, Kody Bateman, discusses the importance of "I am" statements in this video:

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Bateman, Kody. "Promptings and Tennis Balls." Uploaded by TEDxTalks, Youtube, Jan. 27, 2012. https://youtu.be/CcCs_zvleHk.

Remember, there is NO ONE else like you in the world. There is

NO ONE else who has the exact same purpose and talents. You were made to make a difference in the world–don't let anyone or anything stop you from achieving your goals!

PART II

ANALYZING ADVERTISEMENTS

Introduction

In this section of the text, you will be introduced to the writing formula and the writing process. First, you will expand your understanding of rhetoric by learning about the rhetorical appeals of ethos, pathos, and logos. Then, you will learn about visual arguments and how to analyze visual elements, applying what you have learned to the analysis of an advertisement. Examples will be provided for each step of the writing process, so you will have a guide as you write your own paper. In addition, you'll find some mini-grammar review lessons that will help you to clean up your writing in preparation for "publishing" your work by submitting your finished paper to your instructor.

5. Logos, Pathos, and Ethos

The rhetorical appeals of logos, pathos, and ethos go hand in hand with the Rhetorical situation and make up what is called the Rhetorical Triangle. The ancient Greek scholar Aristotle believed that an argument would not be successful without the skillful use of all three rhetorical appeals.

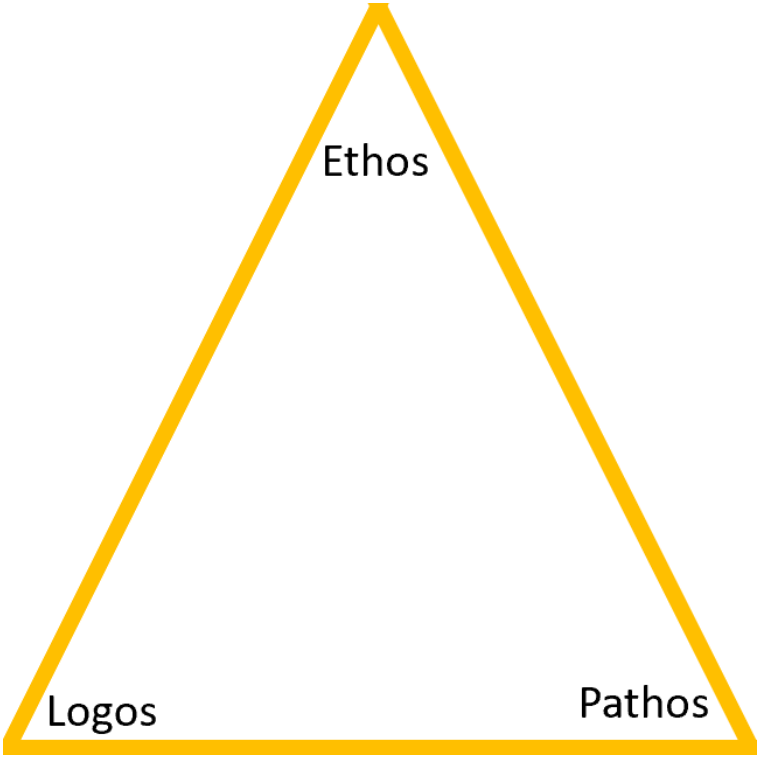


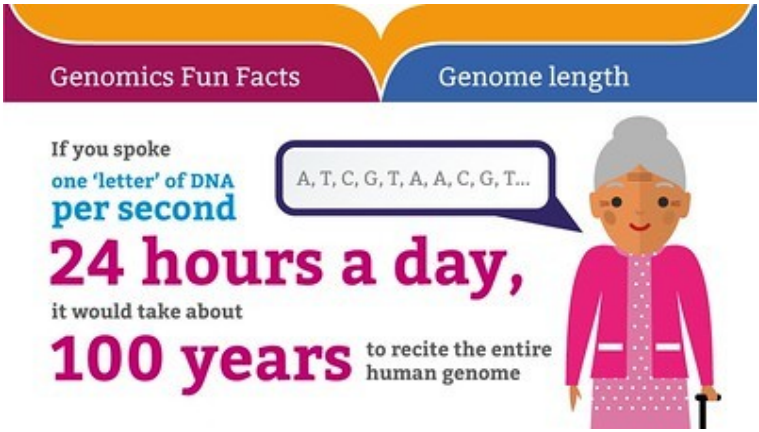
Image by ChloeGui licensed under CC SA 4.0.

The appeals connect the purpose to the audience and are necessary in some fashion for a good argument. An argument that only appeals

to logic but lacks emotion, for example, will not move readers to action. An argument that has great logic and emotion, but presents the author as a shady character is not going to be persuasive, either. It's only when the three appeals work in harmony that the most effective arguments are created.

Appeal to Logic (logos)

Logos is the rhetorical appeal based on facts and reason. Evidence and statistics strengthen logical arguments, which can be based on hard evidence or on reason and common sense.



"Genomic Fun Facts" by Genomics Education Program licensed CC BY 2.0.

Every reason in the paper should be supported by at least one piece of hard evidence. If a reason listed in the paper cannot be supported by evidence, it is considered *personal opinion*. Personal opinion is valuable in many writing situations, but it is not helpful in argument, where the readers expect the author to offer proof, rather than assumption.

1) *Facts* Facts are ideas that cannot be disputed. They differ from values in that facts are traditionally not controversial. Although anyone can dispute a fact for the sake of argument (the sky is blue; no, the sky is gray), the best facts to use in the paper are those that are widely accepted as true by respected and esteemed sources. This is where signal words can really help. Attributing facts to a reputable source ("According to the *New York Times*" or "According to the White House Press Office") can add strength to any argument.

2) *Statistics* People trust numbers; therefore, statistics in the paper are very good pieces of evidence. It is, however, simple to view statistics in opposing ways. Whenever statistics are used in the argument, make sure the reasoning behind the argument is clearly supported by the numbers. If the reader looks at the numbers and reads the opposite argument, the paper will be less persuasive. For this reason, it's very important to use statistics from the original source, not statistics that have been used to support another argument.

3) *Surveys, polls, studies* It is one thing to state in a paper, "most people supported the war." It is a completely different argument to state, "According to a poll conducted by Amnesty International, 35% of Americans supported the war." The first example lacks specificity and proof. The second example is more specific, but it comes from a source that is inherently opposed to war and is therefore likely to be biased. Also in the second example, without the actual question that was addressed in the poll, there is no way to tell for sure exactly to what question people polled were responding. There is also no mention of how many people (out of millions of Americans) were polled. While numbers can be good argumentative tools, be careful to support and interpret data in the argument.

4) *Testimonies, narratives, interviews* Information from experts on a topic can be a very convincing type of evidence. Make sure, however, to establish the credentials of the expert in the text. Stating, "my roommate supports a gun ban" is very different from saying, "John Doe, Director of the Center for Violence against Children, supports a gun ban."

Appeals to Emotion (Pathos)

While logos appeals may convince an audience, it is the **pathos** appeals that move the audience to action through emotions–anger, sadness, fear, joy, etc. A writer might appeal to a reader's emotions by telling a story, painting a picture, or using loaded language. Pathos is powerful, but can be difficult to use.

Royalty Free Image

Emotions can be used to establish a bond between writer and reader. Arguments expressed in emotional terms that readers can relate to can create strong reactions. Using personal experience to communicate hardship, pain, joy, faith, or any other emotion often allows the reader to empathize more fully with the goals of an argument. Some emotions, however, may work in the opposite way. Emotions such as rage, pity, or aggression may turn readers away.

1) *Telling a Story.* Emotions add to the logical reasoning in an argument to make it stronger or more memorable. A simple story relating to the topic can often be the best method of appealing to emotion. It uses personal experience to build bridges with the

readers, it gives an example of the topic, and it allows the reader to empathize and connect with the issue at hand.

2) *Vivid Description.* Description works in much the same way as telling a story. For example, by painting a picture of a beach covered with trash, a writer can evoke the a stronger emotion in readers than if they were to simply say that the beach is covered in trash. Putting the reader into the situation and allowing them to "see" it for themselves can be a wonderful way to move then to action.

3) *Loaded Words*. Finally, using loaded words that remind readers of shared values can be a powerful tool to move emotions. For example, careful word choice that evokes feelings of patriotism can help sway an audience. Pay attention to your word choices and work to make your audiences care about your topic enough that they will be moved to action.

Appeal to Character (Ethos)

An appeal to **ethos** (the author's character) establishes a speaker's credibility. Ethical appeals convey honesty and authority. Appeals to character answer the questions, "What does this person know about the subject?" and "Why should I pay attention?" To seem credible sometimes means to admit limitations. Honesty and likeability are important characteristics used to persuade. Your character is established through your use of good support, through documenting your sources, through your tone, and through your background.

Credibility by Nick Youngson CC BY-SA 3.0 Alpha Stock Images

Claiming Authority: Readers are apt to be skeptical of any claim, but especially in cases where the author is not an expert. In such cases, honesty, integrity, and modesty are essential. Drawing on source material and acknowledging multiple sides of the argument are ways to prove to the reader that though the author may not have studied the topic closely for 20 years, he or she has performed ample research to come to a conclusion.

Establishing Credibility: The tone of the writing can have a big impact on how well the arguments are received. Elevated word choice that does not fit the subject and creates a forced formal tone can cause a reader to view the text as arrogant. In addition, an overly informal word choice that includes slang and simplistic language can cause a reader to view the text as uninformed or elementary. Careful word choice helps establish credibility by allowing the reader to see the honest level of knowledge of the text.

It will be almost impossible to convince all readers in all contexts. However, by paying careful attention to the ways you use the rhetorical appeals, you will be more likely to succeed in your goals.

Key Takeaways:

Remember:

- Demonstrate knowledge by using examples and statistics to support claims.
- Highlight values shared with readers to establish rapport.
- Refer to common experiences, like historical events or discussion of life stages, to connect with readers.
- Respect readers. Especially when addressing those who may disagree, make qualifications to show respect for different opinions.

Attributions:

6. Analyzing Visual Elements in Advertising

Whether you are reading a magazine, watching a television show, or even sitting in a movie theater, you are likely to be bombarded by advertising. The ability to dissect an advertisement to discover any hidden agendas is an important one. Carefully looking at an advertisement's audience and strategies often reveals hidden messages about what the advertiser thinks about that audience. Not only is this interesting, but it also helps you to find the same elements in written arguments.

Visual Arguments

Visual arguments provide a wonderful foundation for discovering the elements of rhetoric, as we are often more familiar with images than with texts. Our world is filled with visual arguments—from advertisements on TV and on billboards alongside the highway to T-shirts & ball caps.

Whatever form they take, images are used to communicate with an audience. Whether a human aid organization displays pictures of starving orphans to communicate the dire need for funds or a real estate agent snaps a photo of a home to capture potential buyers' attention or you choose which photo to put on your Instagram profile, images are used to make a variety of points.

Taking a Selfie: Royalty Free Image

What photo would you use to identify yourself? Would you choose a photo of yourself with your family? A glamour shot? Perhaps an older photo when you were 10 pounds thinner. The photo is still you, but a version of you that you think will best represent how you want others to see you.

Real Estate Agent: Royalty Free Image

Another example of this is a real estate agent. He might snap a photo of a beautiful house, showing the white picket fence and the stunning kitchen, but neglect to turn around and take a picture of the busy gas station right next door.

In many ways, images shape our behavior and can even change our lives. You might purchase a product based on an advertisement—or you might enlist in the army based on an advertisement. The images used in political campaigns can literally change the way a country functions by influencing how people vote in an election.

Analyzing Visual Elements

The presentation of visual elements is extremely important,

affecting how the argument is perceived. Just as how you choose to dress for a job interview might impact whether or not you get the job, so choosing how ideas are represented visually will impact how well the audience receives the argument.

When analyzing visual arguments, such as advertisements, keep the rhetorical situation in mind. The following are important elements to focus on:

Type your key takeaways here.

- Author: Who created the text?
- Audience: Who is the intended audience?
- Purpose: What is the purpose of this image? What does the author want the audience to do?
- Design: How are elements place on the page? Is anything repeated? Is any information highlighted? How are light and color used?
- Strategies: Does the image use humor, guilt, youth, celebrities, etc, to make a point? Are there any cultural references?
- Medium: Does the image also contain text? How does text work together with the image to create meaning?
- Text/Subtext: What do the words say? What are the implications of the words?
- Context: How does the image relate to its larger location? ie If an image is in a magazine, how does it relate to the other content in the magazine?

Remember, in advertising, every detail is chosen very carefully. Advertisers typically sell products by way of ideas. In other words,

an ad for Coca Cola sells fun, not a sugar-laden beverage. Looking for the idea that the advertiser is connecting to the product can be a very effective and interesting way to frame an ad analysis paper.

Assignment: Choosing a Topic and Guided Brainstorming

Find an advertisement in a print magazine that catches your attention. If you don't subscribe to any magazines, you can find a nice selection in your local library or at the grocery store. Moving forward, you will need to have the magazine name and publication date and a copy of the ad on hand, so, if you don't own the magazine, make sure to take a photo of the cover of the magazine and the ad itself. It's not a bad idea to take a picture of the table of contents, as well.

If you can't get to a store or a library in person, you can also locate an advertisement through your local library. It's important to use the library (not just a google search) because you need to know where the ad was originally located in order to complete an accurate analysis of the ad. Here is a video showing you how to access the YC Library's digital magazine collection:

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Exercise

Thoroughly discuss the following points for your advertisement. Be specific and give reasons for your answers. The goal is to discover the main strategies the advertiser is using to target the specific audience for the ad. What is the advertiser trying to convince the consumer can be accomplished by purchasing the product advertised? Remember, your end goal is to write an essay

that shows readers how an advertiser markets a product to a specific target audience.

1. What product or service is being advertised?
2. What are the most important elements that you see in this advertisement?
3. Who is the audience (think about who reads the magazine!)?
4. What is the advertiser using to appeal to the consumer? (humor, guilt, emotion, sex, youth, expertise, celebrities, etc.)
5. Critique this ad as visual artwork. Consider the color, lines, composition, media, contrast, mood, and style.
6. How does the visual artwork assist the words or language to promote the product?
7. Does the advertiser use any double meanings or cultural references?
8. What idea is being used to sell the product? (i.e. Coke ads sell fun)

You may fill in the following form and download your answers:

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://oer.pressbooks.pub/theworryfreewriter/?p=30#h5p-22

Here's an example of what your answers might look like:

Advertisement used for educational purposes for analysis complies with Fair Use laws.

Brainstorming Questions

1. Milk

2. The three characters from iconic TV shows–Mrs. Partridge from the Partridge Family, Mrs. Cunningham from Happy Days, and Mrs. Brady from The Brady Bunch.

3. This ad was located in a 1999 edition of Good Housekeeping magazine. Readers are likely middle-aged women with children. Middle income, interested in the topics in this magazine–recipes, housekeeping tips, etc.

4. Nostalgia, celebrities, vintage look, iconic TV moms, text, milk slogan

5. Visual artwork…retro patterns and colors. Bright colors.

6. The image in the ad goes hand in hand with the text, which has quotes from the shows.

7. Double meanings–"all-time great mom lines"–referring to the characters in the show, not the actresses themselves.

8. Selling the idea of the perfect mom.

For a more extended discussion of advertising, please watch this documentary from PBS:

The Persuaders

An inside look at the multibillion-dollar business and science of selling us on what we want. pbs.org

Attributions:

7. The Writing Formula and Outlining

The Writing Formula

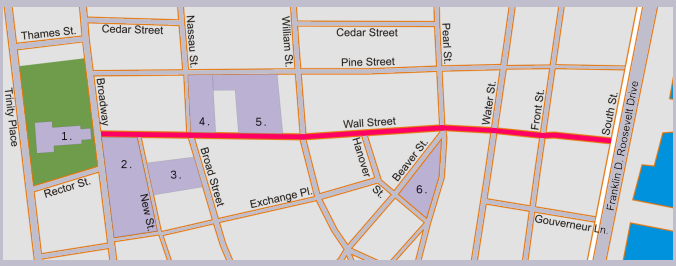
The Writing Formula is based upon the idea that every piece of academic writing, from a basic essay to a dissertation, has the same basic parts. These parts or sections are the introduction, background information, the main argument, counterarguments, and the conclusion. It's important to remember that these sections do not necessarily correspond to paragraphs. Now that you are in college, it's time to move beyond the simple five paragraph essay. Thinking of the parts of a paper as sections, rather than paragraphs, helps you to do that.

Section 1: The Introduction

The introduction has two main jobs. First, it sets the stage for the argument that you will be making, letting readers know what is coming. Second, it connects that argument to the audience's experiences so that they will want to read the argument. For the purposes of an introductory composition course, an introduction is usually no longer than a paragraph. However, if a paper is longer than 5-6 pages, the introduction might be longer. In a 10 page paper, an introduction might be about a page. In a 200 page dissertation, the introduction will be chapter length–10-15 pages!

An introduction has three parts: a hook, an introduction to the topic, and a thesis.

- Hook: The hook captures the reader's attention with an intriguing question, a surprising fact, or a story that pulls them in. Your hook should relate the information in the argument to the reader's experience, connecting the reader to the argument. (Hint: you must know who your audience is to do this effectively!)
- Introduction to the topic: The introduction to the topic serves as a bridge between the hook and the thesis. It tells readers how the hook relates to your argument and gives them them the basic details about the topic.
- Thesis: The thesis is a one sentence statement that tells readers what the purpose of your essay is and gives a "map" of the paper. Your thesis should include both an arguable opinion about your topic and the main points you will cover in your essay.



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Imagine you are giving directions from Building 6 on this map to a business on Gouvernour Ln to a friend. You know the best way to avoid traffic is to turn left on Pearl, right on Pine, right on Water, and then left on Gouvernour. What would happen if you told someone to turn left on Oyster, right on Fir, right on Aqua, and left on Ducey? They would

never find their destination! Your thesis is like a map to your argument. If your map doesn't match the directions your paper takes, your readers will be as lost as your friend in this example!

Section 2: Background Information

The background information section tells readers what they need to know to understand the topic. This information varies depending on the topic of your paper. If you are writing a paper on a piece of literature, for example, you would likely include a short summary of the piece and perhaps some information about the author and other context. For an argument on a controversial issue, you might include a summary of the two sides of the issue.

It's important, once again, to consider your audience. What does your audience already know about the topic? What information is vital for them to understand in order for your argument to be effective? The background information section should be a balance between giving readers too much information and boring them and leaving them feeling completely lost. Like an introduction, the length of the background section will vary depending on the length of the paper and the topic. In most cases for a paper no longer than 5-6 pages, the background section will be somewhere between one and three paragraphs.

Section 3: The Argument

The argument is the main attraction of the paper. In the argument, the author lays out his/her opinion with strategically organized

points that are all well supported by evidence. Because the argument is the meat of the paper, it should be the longest part of the paper. In a five page paper, the argument should be at least three of the five pages.

"Pastrami Grinder" by jeffreyw licensed under CC 2.0.

If a paper were a sub sandwich…

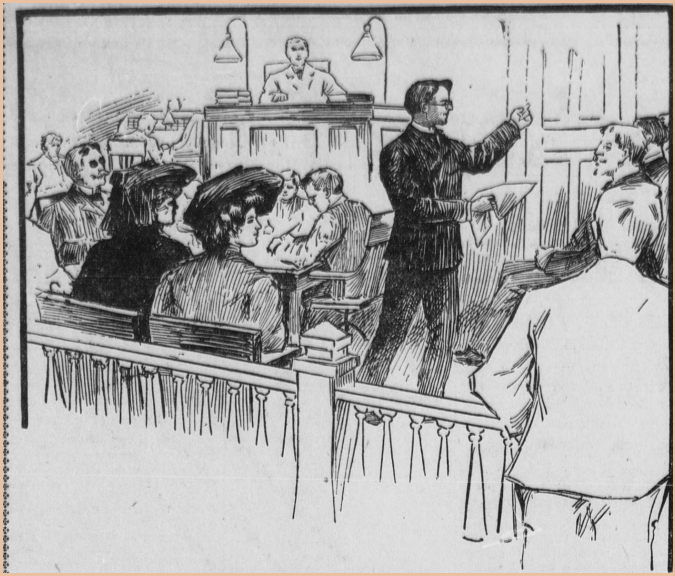
Imagine that your paper is a sandwich. The bread is the introduction and the conclusion, the toppings are the background information, and the meat is the argument. Even if you've chosen your favorite bread and toppings for your sandwich, if the chef leaves out the meat or just puts in one slice (not even enough to taste!), you are likely to be disappointed. Readers feel the same disappointment if the argument of a paper isn't solid.

Within the argument section, there should be a minimum of three main points supporting the main argument. While the length of each point may vary, each point should be at least a paragraph and should contain three very important parts:

1. Topic sentence: The topic sentence tells readers what the

paragraph will be about by echoing the wording of the thesis. Remember the street sign example? The topic sentence tells readers where they are in the progression of the argument, so it's very important that the topic sentence uses the same wording as the thesis.

2. Support/Evidence: Remember the three rhetorical appeals? This is where an author uses evidence to support the point. Evidence might be logical–facts, statistics, or quotes from authorities on the subject. It might also be emotional–a story or description. The main idea here is to lay out the most convincing proof you have that this point is valid.
3. Wrap up sentence: The wrap up sentence is like a mini-conclusion for each point. It tells readers the so what? What did you just prove with all that evidence?



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If a paragraph were a lawyer…

Imagine a lawyer arguing a case in a courtroom. First, the lawyer states whether or not the defendant is guilty or innocent. "John Doe is guilty!" Then, the lawyer gives evidence–calls witnesses, shows images of the crime scene, states the facts of the case, etc. Finally, the lawyer gives his closing arguments: Because of all the evidence you've seen today, it's clear that John Doe is guilty! A paragraph is very similar. The topic sentence states the verdict or the point of the paragraph. The evidence lays out the case, and the wrap up sentence ties it all together.

The points in the argument section should usually build upon one

another. In most cases, the argument will start with the weakest point and build to the strongest one. However, in some instances, it's better to build an argument chronologically. For example, if you are writing a paper about a novel, you might want to start at the beginning and work toward the end of the novel so readers aren't left discombobulated. The idea is to carefully position each point in the paper to make the argument as effective as possible.

Section 4: The Counterargument

The counter-argument section functions a bit like the background section in that it is not always required. In fact, in some cases, this section should be left out entirely. The goal here is to think about what questions or objections readers might have to the argument that might still be left unaddressed. For example, if a writer has argued that a new version of an old film is better, he might explain in the counterargument that, while the new film is missing some important aspect of the original, it is still better overall.

It's very important, once again, to know your audience! You don't want to bring up questions or concerns that your audience doesn't actually have because it could cause them to doubt your argument right as you've got them convinced. In addition, counterarguments could also be addressed throughout the essay more effectively than in a paragraph at the end of the paper. Remember, the counter-argument section is optional and should be used cautiously!

Section 5: The Conclusion

Like the introduction, the conclusion of a paper should be brief but powerful. A conclusion helps the writer to wrap up the argument successfully. One way to do this is by presenting the introduction

backward. Instead of moving from broad to specific, go the other way. First, re-state the thesis, then relate it back to your topic. Finally, end with that idea that you used to connect readers to the topic. If you asked a question, give the answer in the conclusion. If you told a story, tell readers the rest of the story. Depending on the type of essay, a conclusion might also include a call to action. The goal is to leave readers feeling that the time they spent reading the essay was worth their time because they learned something new or were presented information in a way that they hadn't considered previously.

Writing an Outline

Once you understand the five sections of an essay (introduction, background, argument, counterargument, and conclusion, it is very simple to create an outline. Some instructors will ask for an outline, but, even if they don't ask, it's important to write one.

Creating an outline might seem like an unnecessary step. However, outlines ensure that your argument is well-organized and stays on topic. In addition, a well-thought out outline can save hours of writing time. After all, it's much easier to re-organize an outline than to re-write an entire essay!

An outline can be either informal or formal. Below is an informal and a formal outline created using the basic sections of an essay. In an actual essay outline, each item would include specific details about the essay instead of general headings. Instead of Point 1, for example, the outline would state the actual point.

OUTLINING

INFORMAL OUTLINE

Introduction:
- hook
- topic
- thesis:

Background
Argument:
- Point 1
- Point 2
- Point 3

Counterargument
Conclusion

FORMAL OUTLINE

I. Introduction:
  A: hook
  B: topic
  C: thesis
II. Background
III. Argument:
  A. Point 1
    1. Topic sentence
    2. Evidence
    3. Wrap up
  B. Point 2
    1. Topic sentence
    2. Evidence
    3. Wrap up
  C. Point 3
    1. Topic sentence
    2. Evidence
    3. Wrap up
IV. Counterargument
V. Conclusion

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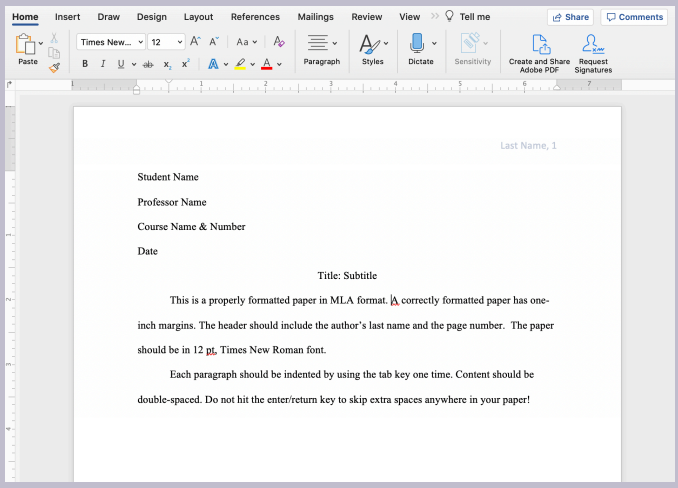
8. Quick Tip: MLA Formatting

In English courses, all papers should follow MLA formatting guidelines. In general, that means that papers will

- Have a one inch margin on all sides
- Use 12 pt. Times New Roman font
- Be double-spaced
- Contain a heading at the top left containing the student's name, professor's name, class name, and the date.
- Contain a unique title centered on the first page.

Example of MLA Formatted Paper



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9. Assignment: Outline

Assignment: Writing an Outline

If you completed the last assignment in this text, you have already chosen a print ad and completed some brainstorming questions. Now it's time to take that information and create a a thesis and an outline for your argument. Remember that your goal is to write an essay showing readers how the ad you chose uses specific marketing strategies to convince the consumer to buy the product advertised. Here is where you will put the writing formula into practice as you begin with the main sections of an essay.

Here are some pointers:

- The hook should relate the ad to a larger concern of your audience–make the paper relevant to them.
- You should assume readers have not seen the ad nor read the magazine. Therefore, they will need some background information before they can understand your argument. In this case, background information should include a description of the ad and a discussion of the audience of the magazine (the context).
- Remember to stay focused on showing readers how the advertiser is targeting a specific audience!

You may want to practice with both formal and informal outlines to see which works better for you. Here's a sample outline based on the "Got Milk" ad featuring Carol Brady that we discussed earlier in this text:

Ad Analysis Sample Outline

Ad_Analysis_Brady_Bunch_Sample_Outline.pdf
Download (119.8 kB)

You may use the following as a template for your own outline:

1. Introduction
    1. Hook
    2. Topic (Include what product is being advertised and where the ad is located)
    3. Thesis (ie The advertiser successfully persuades the consumer that drinking Coca-Cola will bring them joy by using a celebrity endorsement, a brightly colored image, and a catchy slogan.)
2. Background
    1. Description of the ad (Assume your audience has never seen it!)
    2. Context of the ad (Where is the ad located? Who is the primary audience of that publication?)
3. Argument
    1. Point one:
        1. Topic sentence (ie One way the ad convinces the consumer that Coca-Cola will bring them joy is by using a celebrity endorsement.)
        2. Evidence from the ad
        3. Wrap up sentence
    2. Point two:

    1. Topic sentence: (ie In addition to the celebrity endorsement, the advertisers use a brightly colored image to further convince the consumer that drinking Coca-Cola will bring them joy.)
    2. Evidence from the ad
    3. Wrap up sentence
3. Point three:
    1. Topic sentence: (ie Finally, the advertiser clinches the audience's understanding that Coca-Cola will bring them joy by using a catchy slogan.)
    2. Evidence
    3. Wrap up sentence
4. Conclusion

Need help?

If you'd like more help, here is a video of a classroom session with Dr. Palmer:

Creating an Outline

10. Grammar Mini-Review: Parts of Speech

In English, words are used in one of eight parts of speech: noun, pronoun, adjective, verb, adverb, conjunction, preposition, and interjection. This table includes an explanation and examples of each of the eight parts of speech:

Noun	Person, place, or thing	Wow! After the game, silly Mary ate her apples and carrots quickly.	game, Marry, apples, carrots
Pronoun	Takes the place of a noun	Wow! After the game, silly Mary ate her apples and carrots quickly.	her
Adjective	Describes a noun or pronoun	Wow! After the game, silly Mary ate her apples and carrots quickly.	the, silly
Verb	Shows action or state of being	Wow! After the game, silly Mary ate her apples and carrots quickly.	ate
Adverb	Describes a verb, another adverb, or an adjective and tells how, where, or when something is done	Wow! After the game, silly Mary ate her apples and carrots quickly.	quickly
Conjunction	Joins words, phrases, and clauses	Wow! After the game, silly Mary ate her apples and carrots quickly.	and
Preposition	First word in a phrase that indicates the relationship of the phrase to other words in the sentence	Wow! After the game, silly Mary ate her apples and carrots quickly.	after

Interjection	A word that shows emotion and is not related to the rest of the sentence	Wow! After the game, silly Mary ate her apples and carrots quickly.	Wow!

11. Drafting

Once you have a solid outline, writing your paper becomes much simpler. Instead of having to wrack your brain for ideas, you simply write the paragraphs indicated by your outline. Since you've already thought through the best organization for your argument and made sure to include all the necessary components, you can proceed with confidence knowing that your paper will be well-organized.

Here are some tips for writing good paragraphs:

Begin with a Topic Sentence

Each paragraph needs to start with a topic sentence that includes an introduction, a transition, or a combination of the two. The topic sentence is, in essence, a one-sentence summary of the point of the paragraph. The first sentence of a paragraph always has to help a reader move smoothly from the last paragraph. Sometimes two paragraphs are close enough in content that a transition can be implied without actually using transition words. Other times, specific transitions are needed. When no transition is used, an introductory sentence is needed so the reader knows what is going on. If a transition sentence is used, it is logical to follow it with an introductory sentence or to have one joint sentence.

Here are some examples:

- **A transition sentence:** Canned goods are not the only delicious foods available at a farmers' market.
- **An introductory sentence:** Farmers' markets feature a wide variety of fresh produce.
- **A transition/introductory combination sentence:** Along with canned goods, farmers' markets also feature whatever produce is fresh that week.

Commonly Used Transition Words	
To compare/contrast	after that, again, also, although, and then, but, despite, even though, finally, first/second/third/etc., however, in contrast, in the same way, likewise, nevertheless, next, on the other hand, similarly, then
To signal **cause and effect**	as a result, because, consequently, due to, hence, since, therefore, thus
To show sequence or time	after, as soon as, at that time, before, during, earlier, finally, immediately, in the meantime, later, meanwhile, now, presently, simultaneously, so far, soon, until, then, thereafter, when, while
To indicate place or direction	above, adjacent to, below, beside, beyond, close, nearby, next to, north/south/east/west, opposite, to the left/right
To present examples	for example, for instance, in fact, to illustrate, specifically
To suggest relationships	and, also, besides, further, furthermore, in addition, moreover, too

Transition Words

Transition words are useful for more than just transitioning to a new paragraph. They can also help you connect ideas to each other within paragraphs. This list gives some ideas for how to use transitions to connect ideas in different ways.

Stick to One Main Idea Per Paragraph

By definition, all sentences in the paragraph should relate to one main idea. The main idea should be clear and obvious to readers and is typically presented within the topic sentence. If another main idea comes up as you are drafting a paragraph, it is time to go back to your outline to see where that idea fits in. If in revising a draft you notice that a paragraph has wandered into another main idea, you should consider splitting it into two paragraphs. The topic sentence is often the first sentence in a paragraph, but it does not have to be located there.

Supporting the Topic Sentence

The other sentences in the paragraph should present details that clarify and support the topic sentence. Together, all the sentences within the paragraph should flow smoothly so that readers can easily grasp its meaning.

When you choose sentences and ideas to support the topic sentence, keep in mind that paragraphs should not be overly long or overly short. A half page of double-spaced text is a nice average length for a paragraph. At a minimum, unless you are aiming for a dramatic effect, a paragraph should include at least three sentences. Although there is really no maximum size for a paragraph, keep in mind that lengthy paragraphs create confusion and reading difficulty. For this reason, try to keep all paragraphs to no more than one double-spaced page (or approximately 250 words).

Don't Forget to Wrap it Up!

Each paragraph needs a final sentence that lets the reader know that the idea is finished and it is time to move onto a new paragraph and a new idea. A common way to close a paragraph is to reiterate the purpose of the paragraph in a way that shows the purpose has been met.

12. Assignment: Writing a Draft

It's time to begin writing a draft of your paper. Using the outline you created in the last assignment in this text, complete a draft of your paper. Remember, a draft does not have to be perfect. Stick to your outline and focus on creating well-constructed paragraphs for each point on your outline. One way to be sure that you don't stray from your original ideas is to save a new copy of your outline as a draft. Then, you can simply begin writing your paragraphs on your outline. This will help you stay on track with your argument! Another bonus is that it allows you to write the sections that you feel confident about first.

Here's a sample draft based on the outline given in the last assignment:

Sample Draft of an Ad Analysis Paper

Ad_Analysis_Brady_Bunch_Sample_Paper.pdf
Download (73.8 kB)

Posting Your Paper for Peer Review

Because peer review is a reciprocal process, it is important that you take your responsibility to present a complete draft as seriously as you take your responsibility to give good feedback to your peers. Here are some tips to follow:

1) Always post a complete paper. It is your responsibility to post a complete draft for your peers. Your classmates are going to

give you their time to help you get a better grade on your paper. Show them you appreciate their efforts by posting a paper that is complete, in the proper format, and spell checked. Posting a sloppily done paper is inconsiderate and misses the point of the process.

2) Always post your paper ON TIME! Your peers have busy lives, too, and expecting them to review your paper after the deadline isn't fair to them. Be considerate of others' time by posting your paper before the deadline.

3) Don't forget to attach the paper in doc/docx format with your name in the title of the post. Remember, Word is required for assignment submission in this course. Posting your paper correctly ensures that everyone will be able to read your paper.

13. Mini-Grammar Review: Parts of a Sentence

Subject & Predicate

Every sentence has a subject and a predicate. The **simple subject** of a sentence is the noun, pronoun, phrase, or clause the sentence is about, and the **simple predicate** is action being done by the simple subject. We can also divide a sentence into the **complete subject** and the **complete predicate** by drawing a straight vertical line in between the simple subject and the simple predicate. In the examples below, the simple subject is in **bold** and the predicate is in ***bold italics***.

-
  - Einstein's general **theory** of relativity **| *has been subjected*** to many tests of validity over the years.
  - In a secure landfill, the **soil** on top and the **cover | *block*** storm water intrusion into the landfill. *(compound subject)*
  - The **pressure | *is maintained*** at about 2250 pounds per square inch then ***lowered*** to form steam at about 600 pounds per square inch. *(compound predicate)*

Direct Object

A direct object—a noun, pronoun, phrase, or clause acting as a noun—takes the action of the main verb (e.g., the verb is happening to the object). A direct object can be identified by asking *what*? about the verb/predicate. In the example below, we would ask "The pencil contains what?" The answer, "workings," is the direct object.

The housing assembly of a mechanical **pencil |**
contains \ the mechanical *workings* of the pencil.

Subject Complement

A subject complement functions a bit like a direct object. The difference is that a direct object follows an active verb–a verb that denotes action, like eat, read, or drive–and a subject complement follows a 'be' verb–am, is, are, was, were, etc. In this case, the be verb acts as an equal sign in math (=). It tells us something about the subject of the sentence. A subject complement can be a noun, a pronoun, or an adjective.

The dog is a male. (dog = male)

The dog is mine. (dog = mine)

The dog is hungry. (dog = hungry)

Indirect Object

An indirect object—a noun, pronoun, phrase, or clause acting as a noun—receives the action expressed in the sentence. It can be identified by asking *to* or *for whom* of the direct object. In the example below, we would ask "For whom is the walkway being designed?" The answer, "citizens" is our indirect object.

> The **company | *is designing*** senior citizens a new *walkway* to the park area.

Phrases and Clauses

Phrases and clauses are groups of words that act as a unit and perform a single function within a sentence. A phrase may have a partial subject or verb but not both; a clause has both a subject and a verb. There are two types of clauses: independent and dependent. An independent clause is free to stand by itself–it functions as a complete sentence. A dependent clause, however, is dependent on something else: it cannot stand on its own. Any clause with a subordinating conjunction (like *when* or *since*) is a dependent clause. For example "I was a little girl in 1995" is an independent clause, but "Because I was a little girl in 1995" is a dependent clause. Clauses that start with relative pronouns, like *which*, also become dependent clauses.

Adverbial Clause

An adverbial clause functions like an adverb. It modifies a verb, an adjective, or another adverb. For example, in the sentence, "The dog eats when he is hungry," the clause "when he is hungry" modifies

the verb "eats." It tells us when the dog eats. Because "when he is hungry" has both a subject and a verb, it is a clause, not a phrase. Since it can't stand along (it starts with a subordinating conjunction), it is a dependent clause.

Absolute Phrase

An absolute phrase is one of the more difficult parts of a sentence to identify. An absolute phrase modifies an entire sentence and typically has either a subject or a verb or a subject and a partial verb. The verb is often in gerund form, meaning it ends in "ing."

Having done his best, the student submitted his test.

In this example, the phrase "Having done his best" tells us about the subject, "the student," and about the predicate, "submitted his test." The phrase only has a predicate, so it is a phrase, not a clause. Since it modifies the entire sentence, it's an absolute phrase.

Noun Clause AKA Nominative Clause

A noun clause is a dependent clause that functions like a noun in a sentence. It can take the place of a subject, an object of the preposition, or a direct object–anything a noun can do, a noun clause can do.

The hungry teenager will eat whatever he finds.

The complete subject is "The hungry teenager," and the predicate is "will eat." When we ask "Will eat what?" the answer is "whatever he finds." That means that "whatever he finds" is the direct object. Since "whatever he finds" has a subject and a verb itself, we know it is a clause. So, since we have a clause doing a noun job, we know we have a noun clause.

Active and Passive Voice

There are two main "voices" in English writing: the active voice and the passive voice. In the simplest terms, an active voice sentence is written in the form of "A does B." (For example, "Carmen sings the song.") A passive voice sentence is written in the form of "B is done by A." (For example, "The song is sung by Carmen.") Both constructions are grammatically sound and correct.

There are several different situations where the passive voice is more useful than the active voice.

- When you don't know who did the action: *The paper had been moved.*
- When you want to hide who did the action: *The window had been broken.*
- When you want to emphasize the person or thing the action was done to: *Caroline was hurt when Kent broke up with her.*
- A subject that can't actually *do* anything: *Caroline was hurt when she fell into the trees.*

Prepositional Phrases

A prepositional phrase is a group of words that behaves as an adjective or an adverb, modifying a noun or a verb. Prepositional phrases contain a preposition (a word that specifies place, direction, or time) and an object of the preposition (a noun phrase or pronoun that follows the preposition). In general, a prepositional phrase follows this format: Preposition + article/adjective + noun/pronoun. For example, "on the box" is a prepositional phrase. In fact, if you think of all the things you can do in relation to a box, you'll have a really

Key Takeaways

What can you do in relation to the box? You can go…

over the box under the box around the box through the box to the box from the box above the box below the box

"3D Box" by kunal licensed under CC SA.

The following table lists some of the most common prepositions.

above	beneath	into	till
across	beside	like	toward
against	between	near	under
after	beyond	off	underneath
among	by	on	until
around	despite	over	up
at	except	past	with
before	for	since	without
behind	from	through	
below	inside	throughout	

Appositives

An appositive is a word or group of words that describes or renames a noun or pronoun. Incorporating appositives into your writing is a useful way of combining sentences that are too short and choppy. An appositive may be placed anywhere in a sentence, but it must come directly before or after the noun to which it refers:

Appositive after noun: Scott, a poorly trained athlete, was not expected to win the race.

Appositive before noun: A poorly trained athlete, Scott was not expected to win the race. Unlike relative clauses, appositives are always punctuated by a comma or a set commas. Take a look at the way Naomi uses appositives to include additional facts in her essay.

You might also want to take a look at this video explaining the parts of a sentence:

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://oer.pressbooks.pub/theworryfreewriter/?p=44

14. Peer Review, Revision, and Editing

Reading a text as a reviewer should be considered both a privilege and an opportunity. The professional world demands the ability to negotiate ideas and work collaboratively to achieve success, and peer review offers a wonderful way to practice those skills. Peer review, then, offers advantages beyond merely helping a classmate earn a better grade. Peer Review offers an opportunity to apply what students have learned in the role of a teacher. By looking at their peers' work, a student will better retain what has been learned and become a better writer in the process.

Reviewing Responsibly

As peer reviewers approach a text, they should bring with them several qualities: an ability to remain focused on the task of improving the text; an ability to prioritize the needs of the author; and an ability to provide specific, insightful feedback. Peer reviewers should think critically about how well a text fulfills its purpose in regard to the rhetorical situation of the essay. Focusing on how well a fellow student presents his/her argument should help keep peer reviewers from attacking the author as a human being and should prevent the reviewer from hijacking the text with suggestions that change the stance of the author or the purpose of the writing.

Reviewers should understand that the draft is not final. Since the text will likely be revised, focusing on issues of grammar or spelling is not as useful as focusing on the content and rhetorical strategies of the text. In order of importance, reviewers should focus on issues of content, focus, organization, topic, and purpose.

A good reviewer should offer insight that is grounded in the text. Engaging writing critically requires the ability to point out

inconsistencies, to question logic, to seek clarification, and to open the author's eyes to anything he or she may have taken for granted.

A Process for Reviewing Peer Papers

1) First, read the paper all the way through, just as you would a poem or a short story. Appreciate what the writer is trying to say before you begin making comments, either good or bad. If you can't figure out what the writer's point is, try reading the paper a second time through. Remember, you are part of the audience for this paper, so it's important that you 'get it'!

2) Second, hold the paper up against the assignment criteria. When you feel that you understand what the writer is trying to say, jot down what you think his/her main point is. Take a look at the assignment's major criteria. For an ad analysis, a reviewer might look for a clear thesis statement that indicates the strategies used by the advertiser, a strong description of the ad, a discussion of the magazine in which the ad was located, a discussion of the strategies used with examples from the ad, etc. Does the writer fulfill the criteria?

3) Give the writer feedback containing at least three positive comments, as well as pointing out at least three areas that the writer could improve. Remember to include specific examples. Don't just tell a writer his intro lacks luster…give him some ideas to spice it up. Don't just say, "I like the paper," give reasons why. Offering suggestions and reasons help the author to make better decisions about revision.

4) Your review should include the following three items: a recap of the main point, three things you like about the paper, and three areas the paper could be improved. As you do so, remember the golden rule. Speak to others with respect and consideration. Your job is to help them do better, not put them in their place. However, just telling someone they did a great job when you see areas they can improve is not fair. Find a balance between constructive criticism and encouragement.

5) Remember to focus on revision, not on editing or proofreading.

Here is a sample peer review for an Ad Analysis paper:

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Revision

Revision is an important part of the writing process. Our first draft should never be our final draft. There is always room for improvement. A published author of a New York Times best-selling novel can still find opportunities to make the novel better.

It's important to note that revision concerns making changes to what is said and how it is said. It includes adding or deleting paragraphs, changing the organization of points in the paper, adding more support, clarifying ideas, etc. Revision is not a matter of fixing spelling errors and adding punctuation marks. Instead, revision is where an author refines the ideas to ensure that the purpose of the message is fulfilled.

In addition to taking note of comments from peer review, students should consider taking their papers to a Writing Lab or

Learning Center on their campus for additional feedback. Reading the paper out loud to a friend or a family member can also help students find areas that could be improved.

Editing

Editing is the very final step. Think of editing as the icing on the cake. This is where a writer will make the final product look great. Students should not begin editing until they are sure that the draft is exactly how they want it. Submitting papers to a service like Turnitin or Grammarly can help students find grammar, punctuation, and spelling errors. Once editing is complete, it's time to submit the final draft of the essay!

Here is a great checklist to use prior to submitting a final draft:

Editing Checklist

Editing Checklist for Academic Essays

Format

- All papers are in MLA format
  - Appropriate headings and page numbering are used
  - Margins are correct: 1/2 inch from top to right header, 1 inch all around
  - Spacing is set to double, with no extra line spaces between headings and title, title and body, or between paragraphs

- Within the essay, parenthetical citations are used (Lastname 13).
- A works cited page is included when appropriate, with all necessary information.

Mechanics: Spelling, Punctuation, Grammar, Syntax

- Did I run spell-check?
- Did I check homonyms? (Example: to, too, and two)
- Did I look up difficult words?
- Did I proofread aloud to catch obvious errors?
- Are all sentences complete (subject & verb, complete thought)?
- Did I use one verb tense throughout (unless there was a good reason to switch)?
- Did I use present tense verbs to discuss texts?
- Have I checked for run-on sentences and comma splices?
- Does my paper flow when read aloud? Did I use different sentence lengths and styles?

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15. Mini-Grammar Review: Fragments, Run-ons, and Comma Splices

The most common sentence errors have one thing in common: they are mistakes about sentence boundaries and what punctuation to use. It's important to understand how to write complete sentences and fix errors related to making complete sentences (fragments, comma splices, run-on sentences).

Independent Clause: An independent clause is a unit of meaning with a subject and a verb that can be punctuated as a complete sentence. Native speakers of English will usually recognize an independent clause by itself as a complete sentence.

A complete sentence must meet five simple criteria:

- It must have a subject.
- It must have a verb.
- It must begin with a capital letter.
- It must end with a period, question mark, or exclamation mark.
- It must make sense in English.

A comma splice, fragment, and run on do not meet the criteria for a complete, correct sentence.

A fragment is an incomplete sentence. A fragment will be missing a subject or a verb or both. Please watch this video from Kahn Academy:

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A run-on sentence is two independent clauses joined with no intervening punctuation (i.e., run together). A run-on sentence has too many subjects and verbs!

A comma splice is two independent clauses (complete sentences) joined with a comma. A comma splice is basically a run-on sentence that has a comma between each sentence.

Here's another video from Kahn Academy that explains how to recognize run-ons and comma splices:

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Content adapted from "Tips for Writing Complete Sentences" in The Word on College Reading and Writing by Babin, et al licensed by CC NC 4.0.

PART III

WRITING NARRATIVES

16. Narrative Writing

DR. KAREN PALMER

What is Narrative?

Narrative writing is used in almost every longer piece of writing, whether fiction or nonfiction. When an author writes in a narrative style, they are not just trying to impart information, they are trying to construct and communicate a story, complete with characters, conflict, and settings.

Examples of Narrative Writing

- Oral histories
- Novels/Novellas
- Poetry (especially epic sagas or poems)
- Short Stories
- Anecdotes

Employing Narrative in an Essay

Mark Twain once wrote, "Don't say the old lady screamed—bring her on and let her scream." What he was trying to convey is the power of storytelling, or narration, in a piece of writing. Many times it is more effective to tell a story, to let the old lady scream, than to just state facts or state an argument—that is, to say the old lady

screamed. Narrative essays are essays that enable you to tell a story (or stories) to make a point.

A well-chosen and well-told story will capture and hold your readers' attention, arousing their curiosity or sympathy, and making your ideas more thought-provoking and memorable.

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A narrative essay is usually focused around a single event or person, and is often personal in nature. A narrative essay is a writing occasion in which you will likely use "I." But, a narrative does not necessarily have to be biographical; it could be a story about someone you know, or even an event from popular culture or history. The important thing is that the story is compelling (if it's not going to interest your reader, why would you tell it?) and that it makes some kind of point. Remember, even though it is a narrative essay, it is still an essay. Although a narrative essay is not a

traditional argumentative essay, in which you have a thesis and several supporting points, it still has a purpose and tries to get the reader to think a certain way about something; it just seeks to achieve this purpose through a story rather than facts and quotations, etc.

Here are some things to keep in mind when brainstorming and writing a narrative essay:

- Choose your story thoughtfully. Don't just write about the first thing that comes to mind. If you are writing a personal essay, brainstorm about people and events in your life that have been particularly challenging, inspiring, or that changed you in some way. Chances are, if it is a gripping story to you, it will be to your readers. But you don't have to write about great, dramatic things to be interesting. Everyday things can often be the most profound.
- Think about the significance of your story. Why does it matter to you, why are you wanting to tell it? What do you want to convey to your readers?
- Consider the most effective way to relate your narrative. Should you start at the beginning of the story, in the middle of things, or at the end, looking back? Which parts of the action should be emphasized? What is your point of view in the story? Would a snatch of dialogue or a direct quotation from people in the story be useful or should you paraphrase/summarize what they say?
- Employ clear, concrete, meaningful details. You want your story to be evocative, to describe people and places and experiences, but you don't want to overload your reader with unnecessary information.
- Use vivid action verbs. Flee from blandness.
- Don't just show—tell: the story should show the event's significance, but you will also need to explain the significance, at least a little bit, likely in your introduction or conclusion.

You can also use narrative in essays that are not specifically narrative essays. An anecdote is a type of narrative often deployed in regular argumentative essays. An anecdote is simply a brief, especially interesting story, usually something that could be related in a few sentences. Good essay writers often give an anecdote in their introduction as a hook or sometimes in their conclusion to drive their point home more powerfully. These narratives do not tend to be personal, but are generally stories from history, literature, or contemporary culture. In a short essay on how the essence of love is waiting, Roland Barthes concludes his text with this anecdote:

A mandarin fell in love with a courtesan. "I shall be yours," she told him, "when you have spend a hundred nights waiting for me, sitting on a stool, in my garden, beneath my windows." But on the ninety-ninth night, the mandarin stood up, put his stool under his arm, and went away (40). [1]

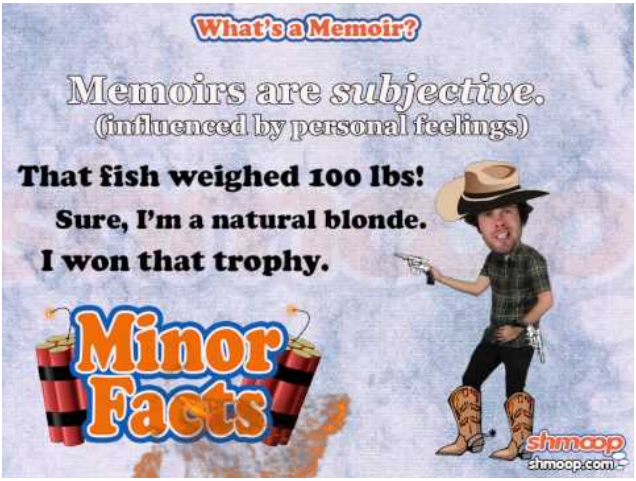
By using a brief story rather than just reiterating his point, Barthes makes his conclusion much more forceful and his entire essay more memorable. So even when you are not writing narrative essays, always be thinking about how you can apply the rhetorical richness of narrative to all your essays, and make note of particularly compelling stories you hear, so you can always be prepared to breathe life into a lifeless essay with a little narrative.

[1] Barthes, Roland. *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*. Trans. Richard Howard. New York: Hill and Wang, 2001.

The "Who Am I Story" AKA The Memoir

One type of narrative is a memoir. A memoir is any nonfiction narrative writing based on the author's personal memories. A memoir is a bit different from a biography or an autobiography. A biography or autobiography tells the story "of a life", while a memoir often tells the story of a particular event or time, such

as touchstone moments and turning points from the author's life. Because a memoir is based on the author's memories, the story might not be completely correct. However, the assertions made in the work are understood to be factual.



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In her book, *The Story Factor: Inspiration, Influence, and Persuasion Through the Art of Storytelling*, Simmons talks about seven different kinds of stories everyone should learn how to tell. One of them is the "Who I Am" story. Simply put, a Who I Am story shows something about its author, and this type of story fits into the genre of memoir or creative nonfiction. Here is an example from Simmons' book:

Skip looked into the sea of suspicious stockholders and won- dered what might convince them to follow his leadership. He was 35, looked 13 and was third generation rich. He could tell they assumed he would be an unholy disaster as a leader.

He decided to tell them a story. "My first job was drawing the electrical engineering plans for a boat building company. The drawings had to be perfect because if the wires were not accurately placed *before* the fiberglass form was poured, a mistake might cost a million dollars, easy. At 25, I already had two masters' degrees. I had been on boats all my life and frankly, I found drawing these plans a bit . . . mindless.

One morning I got a call *at home* from a $6/hour worker asking me 'are you sure this is right?' I was incensed. Of course I was *sure*—'just pour the damn thing.' When his supervisor called me an hour later and woke me up *again* and asked 'are you sure this is right?' I had even less patience. 'I said I was sure an hour ago and I'm still sure.' It was the phone call from the president of the company that finally got me out of bed and down to the site.

If I had to hold these guys by the hand, so be it. I sought out the worker who had called me first. He sat looking at my plans with his head cocked to one side. With exaggerated patience I began to explain the drawing. But after a few words my voice got weak- er and *my* head started to cock to the side as well. It seems that I had (being left-handed) transposed starboard and port so that the drawing was an exact mirror image of

what it should have been. *Thank God* this $6/hour worker had caught my mistake before it was too late.

The next day I found this box on my desk. The crew bought me a remedial pair of tennis shoes for future reference. Just in case I got mixed up again— a red left shoe for port, and a green right one for starboard. These shoes don't just help me remember port and starboard. They help me remember to listen even when I think I know what's going on." As he held up the shoe box with one red and one green shoe, there were smiles and smirks. The stockholders relaxed a bit.

If this young upstart had already learned this lesson about arrogance, then he might have learned a few things about running companies, too. (1–2)

This example shows some of the reasons people tell Who I Am stories. Chances are that if Skip had gone into this meeting and said "Look, I know I'm young, but I've got a lot of experience, I know what I'm doing, I've learned a lot from my mistakes. Just trust me," he would not have won over his audience.

Think about it...

Why do you think using a story was an effective tool for Skip? Can you think of a time when you were able to overcome a difficult situation by sharing a story? How did

sharing a story help?

Characteristics of Narratives

Storytelling, or narration, is a powerful composition strategy that can connect and engage an audience. Filmmaker Andrew Stanton (Toy Story and WALL-E) believes that "Stories can cross the barriers of time–past, present, and future–and allow us to experience the similarities between ourselves and through others, real and imagined."1 These connections help make the audience care. And when an audience cares, or is invested in your story, that's powerful.

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Standton, Andrew. "The Clues to a Great Story." TED2012, Feb. 2012,

TED, www.ted.com/talks/andrewstantonthecluestoagreatstory?language=en.

Why Narration?

As writers, we use narration for many purposes and in varying situations. Most often, when people think of narration, they associate it with fiction or novels–storytelling for entertainment. Yes, this is true, but narration can also be very effective in other writing. We may choose to recount a historical event through a first-person narrative. Or we may even use a compelling story to persuade an audience to take action. How and when you use narration depends primarily on your purpose.

Narrative Elements

No matter the purpose or situation, there are common features to narrative writing:

1. Event: What happened? Who was involved? The event or series of events drives your story.
2. Setting: When and where did it happen? Create and build the story world. This helps to establish context for the story.
3. Descriptive Details: What makes the story come alive? Use vivid words, sensory details, and figurative language to build a dominant impression. Try to show, not tell (See Description chapter).
4. Consistent Point of View: Who's telling the story? Narratives are often told in first person or third person. It's important to choose the appropriate point of view because your entire story is filtered through this perspective and lens.

- First Person: I, we
- Second Person: you, your
- Third Person: he, she, it, they
- Omniscient Third Person: all-knowing

5. Clear Organization: How does the story unfold? The story should flow and have a clear sense order. For clarity, narratives are often written in chronological order (beginning to end). But remember, not all stories start at the beginning. Many stories include flashbacks and flash forwards. Use transitions (finally, next, later, earlier, three days later, as the season changed from fall to winter, a week passed) to clearly guide your audience through the story.
6. Point: Why does the story matter? Before you even begin composing the story, it's essential to determine the significance of the event and the purpose of sharing the story. Ask yourself: Why am I sharing this story?
7. Dialogue: Dialogue 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.

8. Characters: Generally speaking, authors reveal their characters in two ways: direct and indirect characterization. With direct characterization, the author simply tells the audience

something about a character. The line "He was 35, looked 13 and was third generation rich" from the Who I Am story at the beginning of this chapter is an example of direct characterization. With indirect characterization, the audience learns about characters by watching or listening to them. Indirect characterization can also include descriptions of characters.

An Example: Mark Twain "A Cub Pilot on the Mississippi"

Read this excerpt from Mark Twain's memoir *Life on the Mississippi.* Then consider the questions that follow.

DURING the two or two and a half years of my apprenticeship, I served under many pilots, and had experience of many kinds of steamboatmen and many varieties of steamboats; for it was not always convenient for Mr. Bixby to have me with him, and in such cases he sent me with somebody else. I am to this day profiting somewhat by that experience; for in that brief, sharp schooling, I got personally and familiarly acquainted with about all the different types of human nature that are to be found in fiction, biography, or history. The fact is daily borne in upon me, that the average shore-employment requires as much as forty years to equip a man with this sort of an education. When I say I am still profiting by this thing, I do not mean that it has constituted me a judge of men—no, it has not done that; for judges of men are born, not made. My profit is

various in kind and degree; but the feature of it which I value most is the zest which that early experience has given to my later reading. When I find a well-drawn character in fiction or biography, I generally take a warm personal interest in him, for the reason that I have known him before—met him on the river.

The figure that comes before me oftenest, out of the shadows of that vanished time, is that of Brown, of the steamer '*Pennsylvania*'—the man referred to in a former chapter, whose memory was so good and tiresome. He was a middle-aged, long, slim, bony, smooth-shaven, horse-faced, ignorant, stingy, malicious, snarling, fault hunting, mote-magnifying tyrant. I early got the habit of coming on watch with dread at my heart. No matter how good a time I might have been having with the off-watch below, and no matter how high my spirits might be when I started aloft, my soul became lead in my body the moment I approached the pilot-house.

I still remember the first time I ever entered the presence of that man. The boat had backed out from St. Louis and was 'straightening down;' I ascended to the pilot-house in high feather, and very proud to be semi-officially a member of the executive family of so fast and famous a boat. Brown was at the wheel. I paused in the middle of the room, all fixed to make my bow, but Brown did not look around. I thought he took a furtive glance at me out of the corner of his eye, but as not even this notice was repeated, I judged I had been mistaken. By this time he was picking his way among some dangerous 'breaks' abreast the woodyards; therefore it would not

be proper to interrupt him; so I stepped softly to the high bench and took a seat.

There was silence for ten minutes; then my new boss turned and inspected me deliberately and painstakingly from head to heel for about—as it seemed to me—a quarter of an hour. After which he removed his countenance and I saw it no more for some seconds; then it came around once more, and this question greeted me—

'Are you Horace Bigsby's cub?'

'Yes, sir.'

After this there was a pause and another inspection. Then—

'What's your name?'

I told him. He repeated it after me. It was probably the only thing he ever forgot; for although I was with him many months he never addressed himself to me in any other way than 'Here!' and then his command followed.

'Where was you born?'

'In Florida, Missouri.'

A pause. Then—

'Dern sight better staid there!'

By means of a dozen or so of pretty direct questions, he pumped my family history out of me.

The leads were going now, in the first crossing. This interrupted the inquest. When the leads had been laid in, he resumed—

‘How long you been on the river?’

I told him. After a pause—

‘Where’d you get them shoes?’

I gave him the information.

‘Hold up your foot!’

I did so. He stepped back, examined the shoe minutely and contemptuously, scratching his head thoughtfully, tilting his high sugar-loaf hat well forward to facilitate the operation, then ejaculated, ‘Well, I’ll be dod derned!’ and returned to his wheel.

What occasion there was to be dod derned about it is a thing which is still as much of a mystery to me now as it was then. It must have been all of fifteen minutes—fifteen minutes of dull, homesick silence—before that long horse-face swung round upon me again—and then, what a change! It was as red as fire, and every muscle in it was working. Now came this shriek—

‘Here!—You going to set there all day?’

I lit in the middle of the floor, shot there by the electric suddenness of the surprise. As soon as I could get my voice I said, apologetically:—‘I have had no orders, sir.’

‘You’ve had no *orders*! My, what a fine bird we are! We must have *orders*! Our father was a *gentleman*—owned slaves—and we’ve been to *school*. Yes, *we* are a gentleman, *too*, and got to have *orders*! *Orders*, is it? *Orders* is what you want! Dod dern my skin, *I’ll* learn you to swell yourself up and blow around here about your

dod-derned *orders*! G'way from the wheel!' (I had approached it without knowing it.)

I moved back a step or two, and stood as in a dream, all my senses stupefied by this frantic assault.

'What you standing there for? Take that ice-pitcher down to the texas- tender-come, move along, and don't you be all day about it!'

The moment I got back to the pilot-house, Brown said—

'Here! What was you doing down there all this time?'

'I couldn't find the texas-tender; I had to go all the way to the pantry.'

'Derned likely story! Fill up the stove.'

I proceeded to do so. He watched me like a cat. Presently he shouted—

'Put down that shovel! Deadest numskull I ever saw—ain't even got sense enough to load up a stove.'

All through the watch this sort of thing went on. Yes, and the subsequent watches were much like it, during a stretch of months. As I have said, I soon got the habit of coming on duty with dread. The moment I was in the presence, even in the darkest night, I could feel those yellow eyes upon me, and knew their owner was watching for a pretext to spit out some venom on me. Preliminarily he would say—

'Here! Take the wheel.'

Two minutes later—

'W*here* in the nation you going to? Pull her down! pull her down!'

After another moment—

'Say! You going to hold her all day? Let her go—meet her! meet her!'

Then he would jump from the bench, snatch the wheel from me, and meet her himself, pouring out wrath upon me all the time.

George Ritchie was the other pilot's cub. He was having good times now; for his boss, George Ealer, was as kindhearted as Brown wasn't. Ritchie had steeled for Brown the season before; consequently he knew exactly how to entertain himself and plague me, all by the one operation. Whenever I took the wheel for a moment on Ealer's watch, Ritchie would sit back on the bench and play Brown, with continual ejaculations of 'Snatch her! snatch her! Derndest mud-cat I ever saw!' 'Here! Where you going *now*? Going to run over that snag?' 'Pull her *down*! Don't you hear me? Pull her *down*!' 'There she goes! *Just* as I expected! I *told* you not to cramp that reef. G'way from the wheel!'

So I always had a rough time of it, no matter whose watch it was; and sometimes it seemed to me that Ritchie's good-natured badgering was pretty nearly as aggravating as Brown's dead-earnest nagging.

I often wanted to kill Brown, but this would not answer. A cub had to take everything his boss gave, in the way of vigorous comment and criticism; and we all believed that there was a United States law making it a penitentiary offense to strike or threaten a pilot who

was on duty. However, I could *imagine* myself killing Brown; there was no law against that; and that was the thing I used always to do the moment I was abed. Instead of going over my river in my mind as was my duty, I threw business aside for pleasure, and killed Brown. I killed Brown every night for months; not in old, stale, commonplace ways, but in new and picturesque ones;—ways that were sometimes surprising for freshness of design and ghastliness of situation and environment.

Brown was *always* watching for a pretext to find fault; and if he could find no plausible pretext, he would invent one. He would scold you for shaving a shore, and for not shaving it; for hugging a bar, and for not hugging it; for 'pulling down' when not invited, and for not pulling down when not invited; for firing up without orders, and for waiting *for* orders. In a word, it was his invariable rule to find fault with *everything* you did; and another invariable rule of his was to throw all his remarks (to you) into the form of an insult.

One day we were approaching New Madrid, bound down and heavily laden. Brown was at one side of the wheel, steering; I was at the other, standing by to 'pull down' or 'shove up.' He cast a furtive glance at me every now and then. I had long ago learned what that meant; viz., he was trying to invent a trap for me. I wondered what shape it was going to take. By and by he stepped back from the wheel and said in his usual snarly way—

'Here!—See if you've got gumption enough to round her to.'

This was simply *bound* to be a success; nothing could prevent it; for he had never allowed me to round the boat to before; consequently, no matter how I might do the thing, he could find free fault with it. He stood back there with his greedy eye on me, and the result was what might have been foreseen: I lost my head in a quarter of a minute, and didn't know what I was about; I started too early to bring the boat around, but detected a green gleam of joy in Brown's eye, and corrected my mistake; I started around once more while too high up, but corrected myself again in time; I made other false moves, and still managed to save myself; but at last I grew so confused and anxious that I tumbled into the very worst blunder of all—I got too far down before beginning to fetch the boat around. Brown's chance was come.

His face turned red with passion; he made one bound, hurled me across the house with a sweep of his arm, spun the wheel down, and began to pour out a stream of vituperation upon me which lasted till he was out of breath. In the course of this speech he called me all the different kinds of hard names he could think of, and once or twice I thought he was even going to swear—but he didn't this time. 'Dod dern' was the nearest he ventured to the luxury of swearing, for he had been brought up with a wholesome respect for future fire and brimstone.

That was an uncomfortable hour; for there was a big audience on the hurricane deck. When I went to bed that night, I killed Brown in seventeen different ways—all of them new.

TWO TRIPS later, I got into serious trouble. Brown was steering; I was 'pulling down.' My younger brother appeared on the hurricane deck, and shouted to Brown to stop at some landing or other a mile or so below. Brown gave no intimation that he had heard anything. But that was his way: he never condescended to take notice of an under clerk. The wind was blowing; Brown was deaf (although he always pretended he wasn't), and I very much doubted if he had heard the order. If I had two heads, I would have spoken; but as I had only one, it seemed judicious to take care of it; so I kept still.Presently, sure enough, we went sailing by that plantation. Captain Klinefelter appeared on the deck, and said—

'Let her come around, sir, let her come around. Didn't Henry tell you to land here?'

'No, sir!'

'I sent him up to do, it.'

'He did come up; and that's all the good it done, the dod-derned fool. He never said anything.'

'Didn't *you* hear him?' asked the captain of me.

Of course I didn't want to be mixed up in this business, but there was no way to avoid it; so I said—

'Yes, sir.'

I knew what Brown's next remark would be, before he uttered it; it was—

'Shut your mouth! you never heard anything of the kind.'

I closed my mouth according to instructions. An hour later, Henry entered the pilot-house, unaware of what had been going on. He was a thoroughly inoffensive boy, and I was sorry to see him come, for I knew Brown would have no pity on him. Brown began, straightway—

'Here! why didn't you tell me we'd got to land at that plantation?'

'I did tell you, Mr. Brown.'

'It's a lie!'

I said—

'You lie, yourself. He did tell you.'

Brown glared at me in unaffected surprise; and for as much as a moment he was entirely speechless; then he shouted to me—

'I'll attend to your case in half a minute!' then to Henry, 'And you leave the pilot-house; out with you!'

It was pilot law, and must be obeyed. The boy started out, and even had his foot on the upper step outside the door, when Brown, with a sudden access of fury, picked up a ten-pound lump of coal and sprang after him; but I was between, with a heavy stool, and I hit Brown a good honest blow which stretched-him out.

I had committed the crime of crimes—I had lifted my hand against a pilot on duty! I supposed I was booked for the penitentiary sure, and couldn't be booked any surer if I went on and squared my long account with this person while I had the chance; consequently I stuck to him and pounded him with my fists a considerable time—I do not know how long, the pleasure of it

probably made it seem longer than it really was;—but in the end he struggled free and jumped up and sprang to the wheel: a very natural solicitude, for, all this time, here was this steamboat tearing down the river at the rate of fifteen miles an hour and nobody at the helm! However, Eagle Bend was two miles wide at this bank-full stage, and correspondingly long and deep; and the boat was steering herself straight down the middle and taking no chances. Still, that was only luck—a body *might* have found her charging into the woods.

Perceiving, at a glance, that the '*Pennsylvania*' was in no danger, Brown gathered up the big spy-glass, war-club fashion, and ordered me out of the pilot-house with more than Comanche bluster. But I was not afraid of him now; so, instead of going, I tarried, and criticized his grammar; I reformed his ferocious speeches for him, and put them into good English, calling his attention to the advantage of pure English over the bastard dialect of the Pennsylvanian collieries whence he was extracted. He could have done his part to admiration in a cross-fire of mere vituperation, of course; but he was not equipped for this species of controversy; so he presently laid aside his glass and took the wheel, muttering and shaking his head; and I retired to the bench. The racket had brought everybody to the hurricane deck, and I trembled when I saw the old captain looking up from the midst of the crowd. I said to myself, 'Now I *am* done for!'—For although, as a rule, he was so fatherly and indulgent toward the boat's family, and so patient of minor shortcomings, he could be stern enough when the fault was worth it.

I tried to imagine what he *would* do to a cub pilot who had been guilty of such a crime as mine, committed on a boat guard-deep with costly freight and alive with passengers. Our watch was nearly ended. I thought I would go and hide somewhere till I got a chance to slide ashore. So I slipped out of the pilot-house, and down the steps, and around to the texas door—and was in the act of gliding within, when the captain confronted me! I dropped my head, and he stood over me in silence a moment or two, then said impressively—

'Follow me.'

I dropped into his wake; he led the way to his parlor in the forward end of the texas. We were alone, now. He closed the after door; then moved slowly to the forward one and closed that. He sat down; I stood before him. He looked at me some little time, then said—

'So you have been fighting Mr. Brown?'

I answered meekly—

'Yes, sir.'

'Do you know that that is a very serious matter?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Are you aware that this boat was plowing down the river fully five minutes with no one at the wheel?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Did you strike him first?'

'Yes, sir.'

'What with?'

‘A stool, sir.’

‘Hard?’

‘Middling, sir.’

‘Did it knock him down?’

‘He—he fell, sir.’

‘Did you follow it up? Did you do anything further?’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘What did you do?’

‘Pounded him, sir.’

‘Pounded him?’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘Did you pound him much?—that is, severely?’

‘One might call it that, sir, maybe.’

‘I’m deuced glad of it! Hark ye, never mention that I said that. You have been guilty of a great crime; and don’t you ever be guilty of it again, on this boat. *But*—lay for him ashore! Give him a good sound thrashing, do you hear? I’ll pay the expenses. Now go—and mind you, not a word of this to anybody. Clear out with you!—you’ve been guilty of a great crime, you whelp!’

I slid out, happy with the sense of a close shave and a mighty deliverance; and I heard him laughing to himself and slapping his fat thighs after I had closed his door.

When Brown came off watch he went straight to the captain, who was talking with some passengers on the boiler deck, and demanded that I be put ashore in New Orleans—and added—

'I'll never turn a wheel on this boat again while that cub stays.'

The captain said—

'But he needn't come round when you are on watch, Mr. Brown.

'I won't even stay on the same boat with him. One of us has got to go ashore.'

'Very well,' said the captain, 'let it be yourself;' and resumed his talk with the passengers.

During the brief remainder of the trip, I knew how an emancipated slave feels; for I was an emancipated slave myself. While we lay at landings, I listened to George Ealer's flute; or to his readings from his two bibles, that is to say, Goldsmith and Shakespeare; or I played chess with him—and would have beaten him sometimes, only he always took back his last move and ran the game out differently.

Questions

Consider the following questions:

- How does Twain set the stage for his story?
- How does Twain organize his narrative?
- How does Twain use description? Give at least one

example.

- How does Twain use dialog?
- What voice/tone does Twain create?
- What do you think Twain's overall message is? What did he learn from this experience, and what does he hope the reader will learn?

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17. Choosing a Topic and Creating an Outline

DR. KAREN PALMER

Brainstorming

Your narrative should start to answer the question "who are you?" However, this story should only focus on one characteristic or aspect of your personality. Think back to Skip and his story. His story helped prove he was ready to be a leader and ready to run a corporation.As with most other types of writing, brainstorming can be a useful tool. To begin, you might just think about all the ways to finish the sentence "I am . . ." The word you choose to finish this sentence then becomes the subject of your narrative. If a subject is not jumping out at you, think about the way your mother, best friend, significant other, or pet might describe you. Think about a characteristic that only the people closest to you see—for example, has anyone ever told you "when I first met you, I never would have guessed that you were so funny (or competitive or happy)"?

Once you have a characteristic in mind, keep brainstorming and think of one specific example or event that illustrates this characteristic. You might think of a story from your life that illustrates the characteristic–or you might remember a person in your life from whom you've learned this characteristic. This example will become your story. Again, much like a topic, sometimes an example, or story, will just jump to mind. However, if you cannot think of an example right away, look through some old pictures, scrapbooks, or yearbooks. Reread journals or listen to favorite songs. All of these things can spark memories, and one of these memories can become the example or event on which your narrative will focus. This event does not have to be exciting or

flamboyant. Simple but heartfelt stories often are the most effective. Many things can be faked in life, but sincerity is generally not one of them.

Freewriting

Once you've chosen a moment, it's important to take some time to freewrite about this story. Write down what you remember happening. Write about where you were and who you were with. Jot down sensory details. Basically, write down every single thing you can remember–and then start picking and choosing those moments that really powerfully show how this event changed you.

1. **Ask some questions about the event you are going to write about.** When did this event take place? What are the starting and ending points? Where did this event take place? Who was there? Was there a conflict? A resolution? How did you change? Why is this event important to you?
2. **Write down everything you remember.** Of course, there are numerous ways to write a first draft, but for a narrative, simply writing down everything you remember about the event is a good place to start. Usually, it is better to have more writing than what you need. So start by writing everything down in chronological order. Do not worry about any rhetorical strategies or making it sound good. Just write down the entire series of events or actions.
3. **Go do something else.** Once you have the entire story written down, set it aside. Go take a nap or play with your dog, and come back to the story later. Then reread it and see if you left anything out. Time permitting, go through this process of putting the story aside and then rereading it several times.
4. **Think about your audience.** Who will be reading your story? What parts of the story are the most important to portray in

order for the audience to understand the message you're trying to get across?

5. **Think about your main point.** When you're telling a story, you don't want to use the exact same formula you might for an academic essay (ie I learned X by going through a, b, and c.) However, you do want to give your readers a statement that indicates what the essay will be about. For example, "Something happened the following Monday that impacted my life forever." While this statement doesn't have any spoilers, it does tell readers that something significant happened that has a life-changing effect on the writer. Your thesis might also be an observation about life, people, character, yourself, etc. that you flesh out through the events of your narrative.

Here is a great video created for folks who want to write a book length memoir. Though the speaker is talking about a much larger project than what you will be working on in your composition course, the concepts in this video are very helpful for choosing what the best way to present your story.

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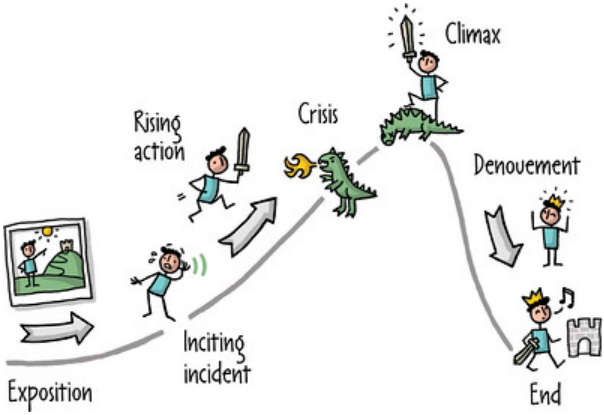
Creating Your Outline

Unlike most academic essays, a narrative is not usually organized by the points you are trying to make, but by the chronological events that happen in the story. Your outline should include the major points of the plot in the order they appear.

The plot of a story is very simple. The exposition sets up the story. An incident happens that begins the story. Events unfold until a crisis occurs. The crisis is resolved in the climax. The story wraps up in the denouement, and then it ends.



Exposition, Inciting Incident, Rising Action, Crisis, Climax, Falling Action, End. From Rosenfeld Media. Licensed CC BY.

An very simple outline for a narrative might look something like this:

Narrative Outline

1. Introduction: Background/Exposition with a statement that provides readers a glimpse at the story's purpose.
2. Inciting Incident
3. Rising Action (this could be multiple steps)
4. Crisis
5. Climax
6. Denouement
7. Conclusion

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18. More than a Timeline…Adding Description and Dialog

DR. KAREN PALMER

Once you have the basics of your story down–you know who your audience is, you know what your purpose is, and you have chosen the scenes that will make up your narrative, it's time to add the details that will allow your readers to relive this experience with you. These details include strong descriptions and dialog.

Descriptive Writing

When an author writes in a descriptive style, they are painting a picture in words of a person, place, or thing for their audience. The author might employ metaphor or other literary devices in order to describe the author's impressions via their five senses (what they hear, see, smell, taste, or touch). But the author is not trying to convince the audience of anything or explain the scene – merely describe things as they are. This is often referred to as showing, instead of telling.

Descriptive writing isn't only used in narrative writing, but across many genres and fields. Technicians must include descriptive details when composing work orders. Nurses keep detailed reports when providing patient care. Police officers rely on description to clearly and accurately document incidents. Food critics write reviews rich with details of the cuisine and ambiance of restaurants. The list goes on. Descriptive writing can help strengthen the

presentation of your ideas by helping the audience experience the subject.

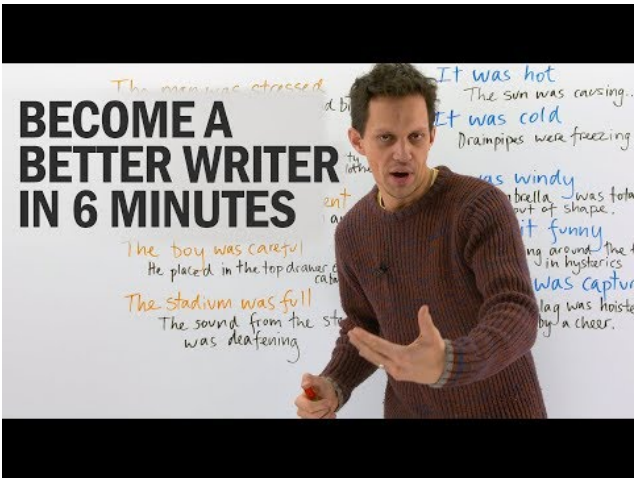
Examples of Descriptive Writing

- Poetry
- Journal/diary writing
- Descriptions of Nature
- Fictional novels or plays
- Ad Analysis!
- Travel Writing
- Food blogs

Creating Rich Experiences with Words

Filmmakers make their movie worlds come alive through images, motion, sound, and special effects. Writers need to think like filmmakers and make their story worlds come alive through description.

Rich description allows readers to imaginatively experience the subject by providing details that describe what something looks like and even how it sounds, smells, feels, and tastes. These sensory details give readers a rich experience, much like a movie.



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Sample Sensory Descriptions

Sense	Example(s).
Sight	The sea of golden wheat swayed, almost danced in the breeze. The majestic Glacier Park lodge sat proudly at the end of the long-manicured lawn. I gazed at the endless night sky afire with glittering stars. The heavy door creaked open revealing a dim interior.
Sound	In the distance, the fireworks sizzled and boomed, announcing another year. The ominous beat of helicopter blades cutting through the air put us all on edge. She sipped the bitter coffee wishing for cream.
Taste	As the boy bit into the crisp Granny Smith apple, his face puckered at the unexpected tartness. A metallic tang filled my mouth as blood began to pool under my tongue. I shivered uncontrollably even though I was zipped in my down sleeping bag.
Touch	With every step, my pack rubbed my hips and shoulders raw, leaving sores screaming for me to stop. Tessa's soft fur felt like silk against my skin. As we walked into the bakery, my senses were assaulted with sweet confections–buttery caramel, rich chocolate, yeasty dough, and burnt sugar.
Smell	1. I felt of tickle of dust at the back of my throat as I walked down the aisles of musty books.

When to Use Description in Narrative

Setting

Each scene or chapter should answer: Where, When, Who. These

scenes are the drivers of the plot. It will be up to you as the writer how to arrange and order scenes; it's important to keep the story moving and keeping the reader interested. It's useful to alternate between fast action and slow action. When you start to edit, you'll decide then what scenes are needed and which are useless.

"How to Describe Setting in a Story" includes some great tips for writing descriptively about the setting.

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Characters

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, his attitude, perhaps even his mental state, his economic and social status, and so on. We

form our initial attitude about a person based on his appearance and we either like or dislike him; we either take him seriously or we dismiss him.

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 has 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.

The most obvious external factors of a character that influence his formation as a person are sex, race, and physical appearance. This is because sex, race, and physical appearance influence the formative experiences a person will go through, experiences that determine who he becomes and affects his way of seeing the world as well as himself.

Characters are what they do on the page, so you'll need to justify the behavior of characters (show their fears, hopes, loves, hates, motivations and how these led to action). Good writers show who their characters are instead of telling the reader.

- Instead of telling the reader a character is kind, they narrate a scene where the character is being kind to another character, etc.
- The way people dress is often reflective of their attitude. A lot of good authors use this technique of describing a person's clothes and thereby reflecting their characters' personality.

What readers need to know about a character is typically less than writers think!

Multidimensionality: What do they hate? What is their favorite

color? Are they obsessive about something, and if so what? What are their favorite expressions and exclamations? What are they afraid of?

Please watch "How to Write a Character Description" for some great tips for describing your characters.

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Dialog

Dialog is another way to bring life to your narrative. Dialog is conversation or people speaking in your story. Engaging dialog 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.

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

Basic Dialogue Rules

1. Use a comma between the dialogue and the tag line.
    1. "I want to go to the beach," she said.
2. End punctuation goes inside the quotation marks.
    1. He asked, "Where's the champagne?"
3. When a tag line interrupts a sentence, it should be set off by commas.
    1. "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.
    1. 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.

Sample

The most important thing to remember is that dialogue should sound natural – like the voice of the person speaking. Practice saying it out loud as if reading a script for an audition. The example below is a narrative memoir. Notice how the author uses both external and internal dialog.

> I was standing in the middle of Dollar Tree, leaning on my cart, when I said, "What?" to my mom telling me about my little black cat, Baby, being found dead a few days earlier. "Baby's dead, honey." I couldn't say anything. What could I say? I had been the one to take her to the farm thinking that she would adjust and be happier as a farm cat. Besides, I had too many cats, six actually, and Baby and Ginger had been the most logical choices to relocate. Both of them were unhappy living in

such a small environment with four other cats. Baby suffered from anxiety problems and Ginger just wanted more territory. She was always so bitchy, hissing like she owned everything and everyone. Adorable, yes, but incredibly bitchy. Baby just wanted to be alone, or with me. The only way I could get her to come out of hiding is if I'd sing to her – any song with her name in it. Her favorite one was the one from the movie Dirty Dancing "Ba-byyy, ohh-ohhh ba-byyy, my sweet ba-byyy, you're the one. . ." When I'd sing it to her, she'd roll 'on the floor and rub against me as if to say, "I reeeaaallly love you!" I'll never be able to listen to that song without missing her now.

"Honey, are you alright?" my mom asked quietly. No, I'm not alright. I knew something was wrong. I had a feeling several days ago – one of those feelings that tell you something is wrong, but I chose to ignore it. "How did she die?" I ask, trying to keep my emotions under control. It's no use though, tears start streaking my face and Dollar Tree customers are beginning to stare. "They found her dead in the cabin," mom said, her voice choking, "I'm so sorry, hon." "She was still in the cabin?!" I practically shout into the phone. "I thought Laura picked her up to take her to her house." Mom grew quiet. After a few moments she said, "They never could catch her. Dad said that they looked for her every day. They moved the furniture and everything, but they couldn't find her. Now they think that maybe she might have climbed behind the fridge to hide."

I was livid, but I knew it would just kill mom and dad if

I blamed them for this. Despite this fact, I had to ask one last question, "Mom, why didn't you guys call me and tell me that you were having problems with her? I could've come home to take care of her. I told you that I smelled natural gas or something on the day that we dropped her off at the cabin. Why didn't someone call me?!" At this point, I was hysterical, and customers were steering their shopping carts way around me. When my mom finally answered her comforting voice was gone. Replacing it was one of defense and insensitivity. "We did the best we could! Dad's been so depressed lately and this almost pushed him over the edge. He knows how much you love your cats and he's blaming himself. It's not his fault and it's not yours either! Do you hear me?"

All I could do was cry. I didn't want to hurt them, but I just couldn't understand why they chose not to call me. And I do blame myself. I knew that something was wrong and knowing that she was alone in that cabin for two weeks, going through god knows what, thinking god knows what, well it just killed me inside. I was filled with guilt. I had rescued her as a baby, beaten and left for dead and now, seven years later I just pawn her off on someone else and she dies alone? I don't even want to know how much pain she may have been in. How in the world will I deal with the guilt of knowing that all of this could've been avoided? How?

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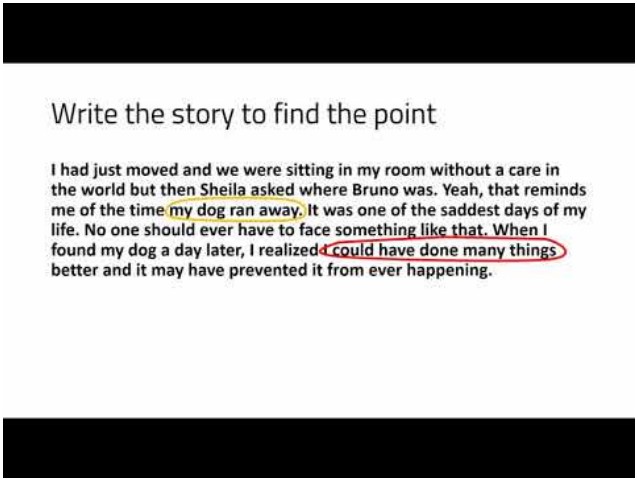
19. Drafting Your Narrative

DR. KAREN PALMER

Once you've completed a solid outline of your narrative, it's time to begin drafting. You might start by writing down the basic story–just get the main events on the page. Remember to think of your narrative as a series of scenes. Which scenes are the most important for readers to experience? Here are some tips for adding those important details to your narrative.



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Narrative Time

Add details to and expand the most important parts of your story. Real time should now become narrative time. Add concrete details and imagery. Imagine the different senses to which the story could appeal. We are a very visual culture, but go beyond describing what things look like—consider incorporating smells or sounds. Think about the way something feels when touched. Also think about how these details can help draw a reader in. Consider this an example from a student's narrative:

> At the beginning of every school year, I am obligated to introduce myself to a new sea of adolescent hormones swimming with impulsiveness, curiosity, and unfiltered tourette-like verbal ejaculations. Sure, I could stand before the little urchins, and with trident in hand, I could dictate the rules of my class and cast off a long list of life experiences that made me the immortal that stands before them or I could let them place their expectations upon me creating an environment of perceived equality. Being a believer in a democratic classroom, I always opt for the latter.

Look at the way this student builds on the details: the words "sea," "swimming," and "trident" work beautifully together. And look at the choices the student made: using the words "adolescent hormones" and "urchins" instead of students; "unfiltered tourette-like verbal ejaculations" could have simply been opinions or obnoxious comments. The story includes a lot of visual elements, but the phrase "verbal ejacula- tions" also appeals to the ears. These words, phrases, and ideas all work together to paint a picture of the author of this story.

The author of this story is a student, but she is also a middle-school teacher. The main point of the story is to show who she is as a teacher. Everything in this paragraph relates to that main point. We do not know the color of her hair, whether she is wearing a shirt or a sweater, or if she is tall or short. After all, none of these things relate to the point of this story. Great detail and description and emotions are very important to the narrative. But they need to be the right details, descriptions, and emotions, and they need to be used at the right time.

Show, Don't Tell

The ultimate success of the narrative depends on how well you show, not tell, who you are (i.e. use more indirect characterization than direct characterization). Have faith in your words and in the story you are telling. Trust that the story works and do not end the story with a statement like "clearly this event shows that I am a trustworthy person." Let the story do its job.

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Consider two more paragraphs from our middle-school teacher's story:

> On the first day of class last year, I allowed students to take seats at their leisure. I sat on my desk and when everyone was settled, I quietly commanded their attention by placing a large black top hat upon my head. Conversations abruptly stopped as my curious audience took notice. 'If I were to say that hats are a metaphor for the different roles we play in our lives, what do you think that means?' I was met with blank stares. 'What if I said that I play many roles every day? I am a teacher, a mother, a

daughter, a coworker, and a friend. Are the expecta- tions for those different roles the same or different?' A hand raises and a girl with pale skin, lively eyes and thick auburn hair answers, 'Of course they're different. I don't act the same around my friends as I do in front of my parents!' She has a smug 'as if ' expression.

'You're absolutely right,' I acknowledge. 'Now what if I were to ask you to define the expectations of my role as your teach- er?' Eyebrows rise as the class considers this. 'I'm going to pass out sticky notes and I want each of you to write down a word or phrase that describes what my job is as your teacher. When you are done, I want you to place your note on the strip of blue pa- per that runs up the wall in the back of the room. Each of you should place your note above the note of the person that went before you so that we create a column of sticky notes. Does everyone understand?' A thin-faced, black boy with large eyes and bright teeth pipes up, "So we get to tell you how to do your job?' I thoughtfully pause before answering, 'Well . . . yah!'

What do we learn about the author from reading this passage? What kind of teacher is she? We could describe her as creative, brave, caring, and dedicated. We could decide that she is not afraid to take some risks. We know that she loves her job. Does she directly state any of these things? No. But her story shows that she is all of these things.

Importance of the Introduction

Will your introduction grab a reader's attention? Think about sitting

in a doctor's office or waiting for your car to be repaired. You pick up a magazine and start to thumb through it. How long do you give an article to grab your attention before turning the page? Some people flip to the next page if the title of the article does not interest them; other more generous readers will read the first sentence or two before deciding to continue reading or to move on to the next page. Something in the opening paragraph, hopefully in the first sentence or two, should grab the reader and make him or her want to read on.

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Here is an example from another student's narrative:

I thought by the time I was thirty I would know what I

> want- ed to be when I grew up. But here I am on the eve of my thirty-first birthday, and I am still searching, searching for where I fit into the world, amidst all the titles I have been given such as Sydney's Mom, Tripp's Wife, and Janice's Daughter. Then there are all the roles I play: maid, chef, bookkeeper, personal shopper, and teacher. Of course that's just what I do and who I do it for. The real question remains, when you take all of that away, who am I?

This is the first paragraph of the student's narrative essay, and it does several things nicely. The conversational tone draws us in. We almost feel as if we are getting to peek inside the author's head. "Tripp's Wife," "Janice's Daughter," "chef," "personal shopper" are lovely specifics, and, equally important, these are specifics to which most people can relate. Perhaps we are Bob's son or Suzie's boyfriend instead of a daughter or a wife, but we can still see the similarities between the author's life and our own. And because of that, we want to know how she answers the question "who am I?"

Double Check for Paper Elements

Treat this story like any other paper. Have a solid organizational scheme (chronological often works well), keep one main idea per paragraph, use transitional phrasing, vary the sentence structure, and make sure the ideas flow into each other. Reflect on word choice and particularly verb choices. Just think, for example, of all the different synonyms for the word walk. A character could strut, saunter, stroll, sashay, or skip. She could mosey, meander, or march. Powerful verbs are a great way to add panache and detail to a story without making it wordy or slowing the pace.

Revision

Proofread, edit, and proofread again. Give the story to a friend and ask them to read it. Do not tell them what the paper is about or what you are trying to accomplish. Instead just ask them what they learned or what three words they would use to describe your story.

Attributions

PART IV

WRITING AN EVALUATION

Introduction

Evaluations are important in college, as you critique books/journals, judge a hypothesis against the results of an experiment, or assess the value of conflicting accounts. Evaluations are also important on the job—you will be evaluated, and you will be asked to evaluate others and their ideas. In fact, we make evaluations everyday, stating judgments about food, clothes, books, classes, teachers, political candidates, TV shows, performers, and films, etc. Most evaluations express personal preference–we like it or we don't like it. But, when someone asks why?, evaluation goes beyond individual taste. To be taken seriously, you must have reasons that are considered appropriate standards for evaluating that particular subject.

20. Basics of Evaluation Writing

Evaluative arguments center around the question of quality. Is something good? Bad? Honest? Dishonest? Evaluative judgments are also about values—what the writer thinks is important. Sometimes the writer's values are not the same as his/her readers' values, so he/she has to bridge the gap by showing respect for the audience's opinions and clarifying the points that they do and don't agree upon.

An important first step in writing an evaluation is to consider the appropriate standards/criteria for evaluating the subject. If a writer is evaluating a car, for example, the writer might consider standard criteria like fuel economy, price, crash ratings. But the writer also might consider style, warranty, color, special options, like sound systems. Even though all people might not base their choice of a car on these secondary criteria, they are still considered acceptable or standard criteria.

To be taken seriously, a writer must have valid reasons for his evaluation. These reasons are based on criteria. Imagine choosing your attire for a job interview at a very prestigious law firm. You look at the jeans and t-shirts in your closet and immediately decide to go shopping. Why? Because the clothes in your closet don't meet the criteria for the interview.

Key Takeaways

1. Think about what criteria you use to evaluate a fast

food employee. You might include things like quick service, friendly attitude, and cleanliness. List at least three criteria.

2. Think about what criteria you would use to evaluate a comedian.You might include things like reflective of culture, universality, innovation, etc. List at least three criteria.
3. Watch these short clips of fast food employees working in a drive-thru.
4. Evaluate the employees based on your fast food employee criteria and then on your comedian criteria.

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of the text. You can view it online here: https://oer.pressbooks.pub/theworryfreewriter/?p=51

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5. Reflect on how your perception of the employee changes depending on which criteria you use. Why is it important to carefully define your criteria when you evaluate something for others?

The question, "Why?", is an important gateway to specific criteria because it forces the writer to articulate his/her reasons. Not only should you be able to clearly define appropriate criteria for your subject, but you should know enough about it that you can also teach your readers something new about the topic. According to Lunsford & Ruszkiewicz (2008), "If you know a subject well enough to evaluate it, your readers should learn something from you when you offer an opinion." In general, researching your topic before beginning to write about it is wise, but, in the case of an evaluation, you should begin with a familiar topic. This allows you to create a basic structure of your essay based on your opinion, and then later look for more information to help strengthen your argument.

Assignment: Evaluation Brainstorming

For this assignment, you will choose a topic for an evaluation paper. Your topic should belong to one of the following categories:

- A restaurant or a business
- A product (cell phone, car, blender, etc) or service (doctor, cell phone service, etc)
- A website or blog

You should choose a subject that you can make a confident judgment about, so think about your areas of expertise. You also want to be sure to choose something that is appropriate for the academic situation. In addition, be sure that your topic is sufficiently narrow. In others words, don't do a review of cell phones in general, but a particular model. Instead of Wal-Mart in general, review a particular location.

Once you have chosen your subject, answer the following questions to help you narrow down what you'd like to say about your topic:

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Considering your judgment: Make a list of the good and bad qualities of your subject.Use the list to decide whether your argument will be positive or negative. You should acknowledge both the bad and the good in your argument, but your judgment should not be ambivalent.If you can judge your subject now, write a sentence or two asserting your judgment. This is your working thesis.
- Analyze your readers: what do you know about them in relation to your subject? What is their likely opinion about your topic? Why would they be reading your evaluation? What standards might they use to judge this subject?
- Consider your purpose: What do I want my readers to believe or do after they read my essay? How can I connect their experience to my subject? How can I interest them in a subject that is outside their experience? Can I assume readers will share my standards for judging my subject, or must I explain and justify the standards? How can I offer a balance evaluation that will enhance my credibility with my readers?
- List all the reasons you might give to persuade your readers of your judgment of the subject. Then, consider which reasons you feel are the most important and which would be the most convincing to your readers. Consider this list a starting point.
- Finding support for your reasons: Make notes about how to support your most promising reasons. Rely on details and examples from the subject itself—reexamine the subject closely. You may also use facts, quotes from experts, statistics, or your personal experience to support your reasons.

This video explains a little bit more about how to write an evaluation and illustrates how it's possible to create an outline based on your personal opinion alone. Please note that locals pronounce New Braunfels "New Brawn-fulls" and McAdoo's "Mac-uh-doos."

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://oer.pressbooks.pub/theworryfreewriter/?p=51

Quotation from 2008 edition of Everything's An Argument, edited by Lunsford & Ruszkiewicz.

21. Assignment: Evaluation Outline

Once you have chosen your topic, write a thesis and outline using the writing formula. Use the answers from the questions in the Evaluation Brainstorming assignment to guide you as you write your outline.

Here is a sample outline based on the video provided in the Brainstorming assignment (Feel free to use this as a template!):

Example Outline

Thesis: McAdoo's is a fantastic family restaurant, offering young and old alike a great atmosphere, wonderful customer service, and a fantastic menu.

1. Introduction
2. Info about McAdoo's (McAdoo's is a new restaurant in one of the oldest German settlements in Texas.
    1. Location–New Braunfels, TX
    2. History–old post office, restored
    3. Type of food
3. One of the best things about McAdoo's is the atmosphere. From the moment you step out of your car until you take your seat, McAdoo's exudes charm.
    1. Walking up to the restaurant–cool exterior

    2. Lobby–original post office doors, etc
    3. Tables–great decor–memorabilia from NB history

4. Once you've been seated, you'll notice the superb service offered at this establishment.

    1. prompt, courteous service
    2. refills, bread
    3. taking care of complaints–all you can eat lobster out–so price reduced

5. Of course, the food is scrumptious.

    1. bread
    2. seafood
    3. land lovers

6. Conclusion…If you're ever in NB, I highly suggest stopping in at McAdoo's and absorbing some of the great old world charm with some delicious food.

22. Mini-Grammar Review: Subject Verb Agreement

Subjects and verbs must agree in two ways: number (singular or plural) and person (first, second, or third). These two general rules hold through all the different subject/verb guidelines. As a rule, plural subjects end in –s and plural verbs do not end in –s. In this section, the noun is in **bold** and the verb is in *italic*.

Pairing Verbs with Singular and Plural Subjects

Many sentences have subjects and verbs that appear side by side. The subjects in these sentences are often clearly singular or plural, and they clearly determine the needed verb form.

Typical singular subject followed directly by the verb	The US **government** *establishes* national parks on an ongoing basis, such as the six parks formed in Alaska in 1980.	Don't get confused into thinking that a singular subject needs a verb without an –s. The plural version would be "governments establish."
Typical plural subject followed directly by the verb	National **parks** *provide* wonderful opportunities for people to commune with nature.	The subject "parks" is plural and it agrees with "provide." The singular version would be "park provides."

Matching Subjects and Verbs That Are Separated by Other Words

When words fall between a subject and verb, the singular/plural state of the subject is sometimes confusing. Always make sure you are matching the verb to the subject and not to one of the words between the two.

Words fall between subject and verb	Six national **parks** in Alaska *were formed* in 1980.	Mistaking “Alaska” for the subject would make it seem as if the verb should be “was formed.”

Joining Plural Verbs to Compound or Double Subjects

Compound subjects joined by the word “and” are plural since there is more than one of them. Double subjects joined by “or” or “nor” match to a verb based on the status of the subject closest to the verb.

Compound subject with plural verb	**Rock and grass** *combine* to make Badlands National Park amazing.	"Rock and grass" is a plural subject formed by two singular words. Don't get confused and use "combines" for the verb because the individual subjects are singular.
Noncompound double subject functioning as a singular subject	Depending on where you look, **rock or grass** *dominates* your view.	Since the subjects are joined by "or," they do not automatically become plural because there are two of them.

Pairing Singular Verbs with Titles and Collective Subjects

Regardless of the singular or plural nature of the words within a title, the title is considered one unit; thus it is a singular noun. Similarly, **collective nouns**, such as "committee," function as singular nouns regardless of how many people or things might actually make up the collective noun.

Title with singular verb	**Everglades National Park** *preserves* thousands of acres of wetlands.	This title isn't plural just because word "Everglades" is plural. The park is one thing and, therefore, is singular.
Collective subject with singular verb	The **team** *meets* twice a year at Far View Lodge in Mesa Verde National Park.	Although you know that the "team" is made up of more than one person, you must view "team" as a single unit.

Teaming Singular Verbs with Indefinite Subjects

Whether an indefinite subject is singular or plural depends on whether the **indefinite noun** has a singular or plural meaning on its own or based on the rest of the sentence.

Indefinite subject with singular meaning on its own	**Each** of the fossils in the Petrified Forest National Park *tells* a story.	Even though there is more than one fossil, the word “each” is always singular. Many indefinite subjects are always singular. Examples include another, anyone, anything, each, everybody, everything, neither, nobody, one, other, and something.
Indefinite subject with singular meaning based on the rest of the sentence	All of **Arizona** *was* once located in a tropical region.	Since “Arizona” is singular, “all” is singular. Some indefinite subjects can be singular or plural. Examples include all, any, more, most, none, some, and such.
Indefinite subject with plural meaning based on the rest of the sentence	All the petrified **trees** in the Petrified Forest National Park *are* millions of years old.	Since “trees” is plural, “all” is plural.
Indefinite subject with plural meaning on its own	**Both** scrubland and rock formations *are* common in desert settings.	Some indefinite subjects are always plural. Examples include both, few, fewer, many, others, several, and they.

Choosing Verbs When the Subject Comes after the Verb

The standard sentence format in English presents the subject before the verb. In reversed sentences, you need to find the subject and then make sure it matches the verb. To find the subject, fill the following blank with the verb and then ask the question of yourself: who or what _____?

Subject comes after the verb	Throughout Mammoth Cave National Park *run* **passages** covering over 367 miles.	Who or what runs? The passages do. Even though you might be tempted to think "Mammoth Cave National Park" is the subject, it is not doing the action of the verb. Since "passages" is plural, it must match up to a plural verb.

Deciding If Relative Pronouns Take a Singular or Plural Verb

Relative pronouns, such as *who*, *which*, *that*, and *one of*, are singular or plural based on the pronoun's **antecedent**. You have to look at the antecedent of the relative clause to know whether to use a singular or plural verb.

Relative pronoun that is singular	**The Organ**, **which** rises up seven hundred feet, *is* so named for its resemblance to a pipe organ.	The word “organ” is singular and is the antecedent for “which.” So the word “which” is also singular. The word “which” is the subject for the relative clause “which rises up seven hundred feet” and, therefore, requires a singular verb (rises).
Relative pronoun that is plural	Arches National Park in Utah offers **sites** that *mesmerize* the most skeptical people.	The word “sites” is plural and is the antecedent for “that.” The word “that” is the subject for the relative clause “that mesmerize the most skeptical people.” So “that” is plural in this case and requires a plural verb (mesmerize).

Matching Singular Subjects to Gerunds and Infinitives

Gerunds are nouns formed by adding *–ing* to a verb. Gerunds can combine with other words to form gerund phrases, which function as subjects in sentences. Gerund phrases are always considered singular.

Infinitives are the "to" forms of verbs, such as *to run* and *to sing*. Infinitives can be joined with other words to form an infinitive phrase. These phrases can serve as the subject of a sentence. Like gerund phrases, infinitive phrases are always singular.

Gerund phrase as singular subject	**Veering** off the paths *is* not *recommended* on the steep hills of Acadia National Park.	Don't be fooled by the fact that "paths" is plural. The subject of this sentence is the whole gerund phrase, which is considered to be singular. So a singular verb is needed.
Infinitive phrase as singular subject	**To restore** Acadia National Park after the 1947 fire *was* a Rockefeller family mission.	All words in an infinitive phrase join together to create a singular subject.

Recognizing Singular Subjects That Look Plural and Then Choosing a Verb

Some subjects appear plural when they are actually singular. Some of these same subjects are plural in certain situations, so you have to pay close attention to the whole sentence.

Singular subjects that look plural	**Politics** *plays* a part in determining which areas are named as national parks.	Many subjects are or can be singular, but look plural, such as *athletics*, *mathematics*, *mumps*, *physics*, *politics*, *statistics*, and *news*. Take care when matching verbs to these subjects.
Subject that looks plural, and is sometimes singular and sometimes plural	**State and national politics** *sway* Congress during national park designation talks.	Just because words such as "politics" can be singular doesn't mean that they always are. In this case, the adjectives "state and national" clarify that different sources of politics are involved ("state politics" and "national politics"), so "politics" is plural in this case.

"Making sure subjects and verbs agree" adapted by Dr. Karen Palmer from Saylor Academy and licensed by CC BY NC SA.

23. Five Characteristics of an Evaluative Essay

1. Presenting the subject.

Presenting the subject is an often misunderstood aspect of an evaluative essay. Either writers give too little information or too much. Presenting the subject occurs in two different places in the essay.

First, the writer should give a brief introduction of the subject in the introduction of the evaluation. This introduction occurs in the second part of the introduction–the intro to the topic. At this point, the writer should simply name the subject and give a very brief description. For example, a restaurant review should include at a minimum the name and location of the restaurant. An evaluation of a vehicle might include the make, model, and year of the vehicle and any important features.

Second, the writer should give a more detailed description of the subject following the introduction in the background section of the paper. Here the writer could give a more detailed overview of the restaurant (type of decor, type of food, owners, history), describe the vehicle in detail, etc. Striking a balance between giving the reader the necessary information to understand the evaluation and telling readers everything is important. The amount of detail necessary depends on the topic. If you are reviewing a brand new technology or a machine specific to your line of work, for example, you will need to give readers more information than if you are simply reviewing a restaurant or a doctor's office.

The language used in your description can be evaluative. For example, a writer can use descriptive adjectives and adverbs to convey a certain impression of the subject, even before the claim is made.

2. Asserting an overall judgment.

The main point/thesis should be located at the end of the paper's introduction. It should be definitive—certain, clear, and decisive. Asking a question does not pose a definitive claim. Giving several different perspectives also does not give a definitive claim. It is ok to balance your claim, though, acknowledging weaknesses (or strengths) even as you evaluate a subject positively: "While the Suburban is a gas guzzler, it is the perfect car for a large family…."

Providing a map of your reasons/criteria within the thesis is a great technique for creating organization and focus for your essay. For example, "While the Suburban is a gas guzzler, it is the perfect car for a large family because it can seat up to 9, it has a high safety rating, and it has the best in class towing capacity." Not only does this example give a clear, balanced claim, but it also lays out the writer's reasons up front, creating a map in the reader's mind that will help him follow the reasoning in the essay.

3. Giving Reasons and Support

After presenting the subject and providing readers with a clear claim, the writer must explain and justify his/her evaluation using reasons that are recognized by readers as appropriate. This occurs in the argument section of the paper and should be the most extensive part of the paper. Reasons should reflect values or standards typical for the subject. If a writer uses a criteria that is not typical for the subject, he/she must be prepared to defend that decision in the essay. For example, "Buying local may not always be at the forefront of a buyer's mind when shopping for eggs, but…" Each reason should be clearly stated as a topic sentence that both states the reason and refers back to the main claim. Going back to the suburban example, a body paragraph/section might begin with the following topic sentence: "One of the obvious reasons a suburban is great for large families is its capacity for holding that large family and all of their necessary traveling items."

Following the topic sentence, a writer must include relevant examples, quotes, facts, statistics, or personal anecdotes to support the reason. Depending on what the subject is, the support might be different. To support a claim about a book/film, for example, a

writer might include a description of a pivotal scene or quotes from the book/film. In contrast, to support a claim about gas mileage, a writer would probably simply give the information from the vehicle specifications. Support can come from a writer's own knowledge and experience, or from published sources.

4. *Counterarguing*:

Counterarguing means responding to readers' objections and questions. In order to effectively counterargue, a writer must have a clear conception of his/her audience. What does the audience already know or believe about the subject? Effective counterarguing builds credibility in the eyes of the audience because it creates a sense that the writer is listening to the reader's questions and concerns.

Counterarguments can occur at the end of the essay, after the writer has made his/her point, or throughout the essay as the writer anticipates questions or objections. Writers can respond to readers' objections in two ways. First, a writer can acknowledge an objection and immediately provide a counter-argument, explaining why the objection is not valid. Second, a writer can concede the point, and allow that, the subject does have a flaw. In either case, it is important to be respectful of opposing positions, while still remaining firm to the original claim.

5. *Establishing credibility and authority*:

A writer's credibility and authority leads to readers' confidence in your judgment and their willingness to recognize and acknowledge that credibility and authority. An author can gain credibility by showing that he/she knows a lot about the subject. In addition, the writer shows that his/her judgment is based on valid values and standards.

The writer's authority is in large part based upon the background of the author—education, etc. Is the author qualified to make a judgment? For some subjects, like a film review, simply watching the film might be enough. In other instances, like evaluating the quality of newly constructed cabinets or the engine of a new care, more experience might be necessary.

24. Research for an Evaluative Essay

While many evaluative essays are based primarily on the opinion of the person writing the evaluation, it's important for an author to find ways to bolster his/her authority or ethos in the paper. Remember, one of the ways to increase an author's credibility is to use quotes or examples from credible sources. In addition, including facts and statistics can be a great way to support some arguments using a logical appeal. Quoting from a well-known expert, for example, shows your audience that your opinions are supported by others. If you are evaluating a restaurant, including quotes from other reviewers from a site like *Yelp* might also help to make your argument more authoritative.

Remember that each reason should be supported by solid evidence. Quantitative evidence is evidence that can be measured, like the fuel economy of a car. Qualitative evidence is based on values, beliefs, and emotions—like buying a car because it is better for the environment. In any case, you must be specific. Simply saying that a car has great fuel economy is not enough. You must give the exact miles per gallon to show your audience that your claim is supported.

Supporting evidence to strengthen the argument section of your paper is not the only reason to do research. Research can also help to support your background and counterarguments sections. Finding a source that can do all three is a great way to economize your time.

So, what is the best place to search for a source for your Evaluative essay?

If you are writing about a restaurant or a business, their website could be a treasure trove of information. For example, a restaurant's website might include the restaurant's location, menu, history, and

even reviews. If a restaurant doesn't have a website, try looking for a social media site. Often a site like Facebook will contain a plethora of information, including reviews, about a restaurant or business.

For a product, it may be possible to find a website, as well. If not, consumer review sites can be a great source of information. *Edwards* or *Kelley Blue Book*, for example, would be great resources for an evaluation of. a vehicle.

25. MLA and APA Formatting

Whatever source you use, it's important to be sure that the source is a good one (not wikipedia!). Take careful notes from the source to be sure to accurately represent the information you present, and be sure to quote properly. Quoting properly includes two parts: the reference page and the in-text citation. Typically, in English classes, we use MLA formatting. However, students planning to enter a nursing program might like to practice using APA formatting instead. In the lesson that follows, students will be introduced to both MLA and APA formatting. However, all examples given in this text will follow the correct formatting for English courses and use MLA.

Here is a lesson on MLA and APA formatting:

https://www.softchalkcloud.com/lesson/serve/P5fic4euLN2XTw/html

https://www.softchalkcloud.com/lesson/serve/P5fic4euLN2XTw/html

To recap: the Works Cited page functions like a dictionary or an encyclopedia of your sources. It gives readers the ability to get more information from the sources you've used if they would like. An author must give readers all the information they might need to find the source on their own. Therefore, a website by itself is never enough information for a Works Cited listing. A web link can expire or be changed. Giving the name of the website, an author, etc, can give a reader enough information to locate the source a different way. For

easy reference, all sources in the Works Cited page should be listed in alphabetical order and use a hanging indent.

In order to correctly direct readers to the Works Cited listing for a source, an author must include the first word/words from the Works Cited listing in parenthesis after the quote or reference. This allows a reader to easily locate the source in the Works Cited page.

Remember, correctly cite each source in your Works Cited page. Then, when you include a quote or a reference from a source, be sure to correctly cite the source in an in-text citation.

- Introduce your quote (don't just copy and paste something from your source!).
- Make sure the quote is in quotation marks.
- Properly cite the quote with an in-text citation. Before the end mark, in parenthesis, type the first word/words of the Works Cited listing and the page number, if applicable.

MLA Formatting for Common Sources

Note that the in text citation (what is in parenthesis after a quote) is the first word in the Works Cited listing. Every source listed in your Works Cited should be cited at least once in the text of the paper.

Type of Source	Works Cited Entry	In -Text Citation
Website	"Castles in Medieval Times." *yourchildlearns.com*. 2000. Owl and Mouse Educational Software. 9 March 2003. <http://www.yourchildlearns.com/castle_history.htm (Links to an external site.)>. Accessed July 29, 2011.	(Castles)
Film	*The Empire Strikes Back*.Dir. George Lucas. Perf. Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher. Twentieth Century Fox, 1980.	(The Empire)
Article Online	Achenbach, Joel. "America's river." *Washington Post*. 5 May 2002. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A13425-2202May1.html>. Accessed 20 July 2003.	(Achenbach)
Book	Gorman, Elizabeth. *Prairie Women*. Yale University Press, 1986.	(Gorman)
Yelp/ Social Media Posts	B., Elizabeth. "Olsen's Grain." *Yelp*, 10/4/16. https://www.yelp.com/biz/olsens-grain-prescott?hrid=HjFTGmfTuS6rvsmVpTNZfQ&utm_campaign=www_review_share_popup&utm_medium =copy_link&utm_source=(direct). Accessed 10/10/16.	(B., Elizabeth)

TIP: Here is a great online citation creator that can help you cite websites correctly: http://www.citationmachine.net.

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26. Assignment: Evaluation Draft

Now that you have a solid outline and have completed your research, it's time to write a draft of your essay.

1. First, write your paper in your own words using your outline to ensure that your argument is well-organized and focused.
2. Second, create a Works Cited page that correctly cites any sources you plan to use in your paper.
3. Third, insert quotes from your source(s) to support your ideas. Be sure to cite each quote in an in-text citation that matches the first word(s) of the Works Cited listing.

Here is a sample evaluation:
McAdoo_s_Sample_Paper.pdf
Download (136.7 kB)

27. Mini-Grammar Review: Creating Clear, Complete, and Specific Sentences

Sometimes writers clutter their writing with unnecessary words or phrases, which can create writing that is boring. While this can be unintentional, some students add these words and phrases in an effort to meet a word count requirement. Unfortunately, this solution takes a lot of effort and results in sub-par writing. In addition, instructors notice this tactic.

Here are some tips for avoiding wordy writing:

- Use active voice
- Avoid expletives (There are, There is, It is)
- Avoid using inflated vocabulary
- Get rid of "that"
- Avoid repetition
- Eliminate words like really, actually, so, just, totally, and quite

If you find yourself short on words, it's likely that your paper is missing an important element of the assignment or that you've chosen a topic that is not suitable. Rather than try to extend your paper with unnecessary words, look for additional examples to support your points. Make sure you have sufficient background information. Check to see that you have at least one quote from an outside source per paragraph. Make sure each quote is surrounded by your own words.

28. Plagiarism

Writing Tip: Avoiding Plagiarism

The term plagiarism is derived from the Latin word for "kidnapper." When you plagiarize, you essentially 'kidnap' another person's words or ideas and pass them off as your own without acknowledgment. Plagiarism is often a deliberate act. Whether a student is trying to get out of writing a paper and copies one from the web or a songwriter ' steals' lyrics from a band member, plagiarism is wrong. Deliberate plagiarism is an intentional misrepresentation meant to deceive the reader.

However, plagiarism can also be unintentional. On an old episode of Seinfeld, the character of Elaine creates a political cartoon for the *New York Times*, only to find later that it was an exact copy of another comic strip.

/embed/PFL8B045AZLQwiT8

This often happens in music and poetry, too. These are often not deliberate acts of plagiarism, but they are plagiarism just the same and can lead to negative consequences for the perpetrator. For example, when MC Hammer used some of the music from the song "Super Freak" in his song "Can't Touch This," it resulted in a law suit.

Students often plagiarize unintentionally, as well, simply because they do not realize what should be cited. For example, a student might include a statistic in his/her paper and not give the source. That is plagiarism. If a student copies a sentence or two from a Wikipedia article and gives the source in parentheses after the quote, but does not put the quote in quotations marks, that is plagiarism.

Avoiding Plagiarism

Student plagiarism most often occurs during note taking or drafting, as students rushing to complete a thought insert a quote, with every intention to go back and properly cite the source. Of course, once the paper is done, those good intentions mean little

when the student can't remember what was a quote and what was his own idea.

One way to avoid unintentional plagiarism is to begin by writing down your own ideas first. Put an asterisk * in the text where you know you want to insert a quote, but don't put the quote in yet. This method ensures that you are consciously inserting quotes at a time when you can take the time to cite the source properly. One side benefit of this method is that you don't lose your train of thought while writing. Another is that you are focusing on your own words and ideas—not simply reporting what others have said. In fact, APA guidelines state that no more than 20% of a text should be referenced from other sources.

Another important step is to carefully check your text against each source. Make sure that all direct quotes are properly enclosed in quotation marks and cited. Double check that any paraphrases are also cited properly.

As a student, you also have the option to subscribe to a plagiarism detection service. Some of them charge a minimal fee, like www.writecheck.com. Others are free, like grammarly.com. The percentage score you receive tells you how much of the paper is word for word quoting from other sources. Reviewing your report can help you identify improper citation and unintentional plagiarism. Remember that any score over 20% is unacceptable—even if every quote is properly documented–as no more than 20% of your paper should be citations from outside sources.

Note that ideas that are common knowledge do not need to be cited. Common knowledge includes well-known facts or general knowledge (like the number of states in the union or the team that won the Super Bowl). Sometimes what is common knowledge in the field you are studying may not be common knowledge to you. But, if you see the same thing over and over again in all of your sources, this is probably common knowledge. When in doubt, always cite!

Consequences of Plagiarism

The consequences of plagiarism vary widely, depending on the

writing situation. Songwriters caught plagiarizing face hefty fines, as well as the possible end to their careers. Academic writers may lose their jobs. Students can receive failing grades or even be expelled from school. Regardless of your writing situation, your credibility as a writer and as a person and as a research is compromised. Take the extra time to verify your sources and give credit where credit is due.

29. Mini-Grammar Review: Confusing Shifts

One of the more common errors students make in writing is shifting from one form to another in the middle of a sentence. Whether this shift is in person, number, subject, voice, or tense, this can be confusing for readers.

Type of Shift	Explanation	Example
Person	Person refers to the point of view. A writer might write in first person (I/we), second person (you), or third person (he, she, it, they). It's important to keep the person consistent.	Incorrect: When *a writer* edits his work, *you* should be sure to check spelling errors. (shift from 3rd to 2nd person)
Number	Number refers to whether something is singular or plural. If a sentence starts out singular, it should not shift to plural mid-stream.	Incorrect: A *student* should always revise *their* work. (shift from singular to plural)
Subject	The subject here is the subject of the sentence. In a compound sentence, and even in a paragraph, it's important to be consistent with the subject to avoid confusion.	Incorrect: Students look forward to graduation, but people don't always enjoy graduation. (shift from students to people)
Voice	Voice refers to active or passive voice. With rare exceptions, all parts of a sentence should maintain the same voice.	Incorrect: Most *students expect* to graduate, but *challenges should be expected*. (shift from active to passive)
Tense	Tense refers to the tense of the verb, i.e. past, present, future. The tense should not change in a sentence.	Incorrect: When the class *began*, students *are working* hard. (shift from past to present tense)

PART V

WRITING AN ARGUMENT

Introduction

At the beginning of this text, we discussed your purpose in life. Your "Why," remember, is the reason that you are here–the thing that you are going to do to make the world a better place. In this last section of the text, you're going to return to that idea by exploring one way people can make a difference in the world–through a non-profit organization. In general, a non-profit is an organization that was started because one person saw a need and decided to meet that need. Though not all problems solved by non-profits are social problems, many of them are. I hope that, through this last section, you not only learn about some people making a difference in the world, but that you are inspired to make a difference, yourself.

30. Social Problems

What is a Social Problem?

"A social problem is any condition or behavior that has negative consequences for large numbers of people and that is generally recognized as a condition or behavior that needs to be addressed."

- The definition of a social problem has both an objective component and a subjective component. The objective component involves empirical evidence of the negative consequences of a social condition or behavior, while the subjective component involves the perception that the condition or behavior is indeed a problem that needs to be addressed.
- The social constructionist view emphasizes that a condition or behavior does not become a social problem unless there is a perception that it should be considered a social problem.
- The natural history of a social problem consists of four stages: emergence and claims making, legitimacy, renewed claims making, and alternative strategies.

What is Social Problem Solving?

Social problem solving occurs when an individual or an organization attempts to solve a social problem. This process has several steps:

1. Recognize that there is a problem.
2. Define the problem.
3. Brainstorm solutions to the problem.
4. Choose a method to solve the problem.
5. Implement the method chosen.
6. Assess the outcome.
7. Repeat, if necessary until the problem is solved.

Paraphrased from "Teaching Students to Solve Social Problems " from the UF College of Education

Ways to Solve Social Problems

There are three primary ways that our society attempts to solve social problems.

- Government: Many government programs have been created to solve social problems. Programs like FDR's New Deal, food stamps, medicare, welfare, and more are all examples of the government trying to solve a social problem. These programs are paid for by tax dollars and are run by government agencies.
    - A variety of perspectives on Government solving social problems:
        - Harvard Business Review
        - National Review
        - Social and Regulatory Policy
        - Social Welfare history
- Non-Profit organizations: Non-profit organizations are generally founded by individuals who see a need in their communities and decide to do something about it. They rely on volunteers and donations to help them enact their solutions.
    - Brief History of Non-profit organizations: https://nonprofithub.org/starting-a-nonprofit/a-brief-history-of-nonprofit-organizations/
- Business: While business as a solution to a social problem might seem odd to some, many businesses are changing the world and making a profit at the same time. Because they do not rely on donations or volunteer work, some believe that business could be a better way to approach some social problems.
    - Michael Porter "The Case for Letting Business Solve Social Problems"

A TED element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://oer.pressbooks.pub/theworryfreewriter/?p=72

- *"What is a Social Problem" adapted from "1.1 What is a Social Problem?" by Dr. Karen Palmer and licensed under CC NC SA.*
- *Other content created by Dr. Karen Palmer and licensed under CC BY NC SA.*

31. Assignment: Explore Your Topic

There are many times in life when we must explore our options. Whether we are choosing what vehicle to purchase, what school to go to, or which person to hire for a position, we have to think through all the options and through our own biases so we can make an objective decision.

For this assignment, you're going to be exploring ideas for your final argument paper. Choose a non-profit organization–an organization whose goal is to help others and/or make the world a better place. You may choose an organization you already support, one that you want to learn more about, or one that serves a cause you care about.

Some ideas include…

MADD, Homeless shelter/food bank, Animal shelter, YMCA, Habitat for Humanity, Salvation Army, A school,

Make a wish, or a Military support organization. You might even choose a small group, like the NBWCC, a women's networking group who works to raise money for scholarships.

Image by Nick Youngson CC BY-SA 3.0 Alpha Stock Images.

Your job this week is to explore your feelings about this cause/organization. Think through why this is important to you–and why it might be important to your classmates.

Write a short, 1-2 page paper exploring your ideas on the organization/cause you chose this week. Tell readers what organization you chose and what cause the organization supports. Explain why you chose this organization/cause. What do you believe to be true about this topic? Consider what in your background, education, history, family, friendships, upbringing, and work experience has helped you come to the conclusions you have reached about the topic. Why do you believe what you do?

32. Researching for an Argument

Once you have a solid topic, you should begin researching. Research at the university level requires expertise on a topic while drawing from a wide variety of sources. The YC Library is a wonderful source of information, with articles and even whole books accessible completely online. In addition, there are many reputable websites from which credible information can be gleaned.

As you research, I want you to remember that your goal is to find out more about your organization and the problem it solves. Many students begin research simply by looking for quotes that will support their own opinions. This method does not create good arguments! Before you begin researching, write down some questions you have about the organization you chose and the problem it solves. Do your best to find the answers to those questions in your research.

Possible research questions:

Who founded the organization? What problem does it do? Where is the organization located? When was it founded? Why was it founded? Who does the problem affect? What are some solutions to the problem? Where else can people go for help? When did the problem begin? Why does the problem persist?

Image in the public domain.

For a wonderful overview of the research process, visit https://www.yc.edu/v5content/library/improve-research.htm

Types of Sources

Both print and internet sources may be utilized effectively in an academic argument. Depending on the situation, one type of source might be more effective than another type. For example, when discussing the Civil War, print sources will probably be the most effective. But, when discussing the whole foods movement, internet sources like the Weston Price Foundation might be more effective. The key is to find a diversity of sources, both in type and viewpoint. Diversity in your research will lead to balance in your argument, which, in turn, will lead to credibility with your audience.

Using Databases

The YC Databases will prove to be your most important research tool over the course of your academic career. With the databases, you can find credible, academic sources online right from your computer. The databases even include a citation shortcut!

See this YC Library Tutorial for using databases: https://yc.libwizard.com/proquest-basics

Evaluating Sources

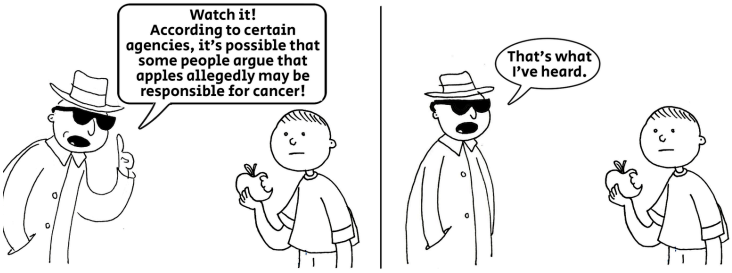


Image created by Rachelli Rotner and licensed under CC BY SA 3.0.

As mentioned previously, the quality of your sources is an important factor in establishing your credibility with your audience. The following are important factors to consider when evaluating sources.

1. *Relevance* Is the source relevant to your topic? For example, if I were to write an essay about creating a community garden on a college campus, a source relating the history of community gardens might be relevant, but one discussing the creation of a campus garden might be even more relevant to my topic.
2. *Reliability* Reliable sources provide verifiable information. Sources that do not give citations or references are not reliable because the information given cannot be verified. In written sources, documentation is usually provided within the text and in a references page, as well. Internet sources may have documentation incorporated, or they may simply include hyperlinks to the source itself.
3. *Credibility* The credibility of a source can be determined in many ways. A quick way to rule out a source as credible is to check for spelling and grammatical errors. Another is to look for logical fallacies and author bias. Does the author make reasonable claims, support them with reliable evidence, and appear to treat any opposing voices with respect?

4. *Timeliness* Check the date the source was published. If the topic is very current, older sources may not add useful information. If the topic is historical, older sources may help put the issue in perspective. For example, a 1997 report on elderly drivers may or may not be helpful in an argument about elderly drivers 23 years later in 2020.
5. *Diversity* Does the author utilize sources that all come from the same website, for example, or sources all written by the same author, or does the author's work contain references from a wide variety of perspectives?

Keeping a Research Journal

As you research, it's important to keep a record of the information you find. It might not seem difficult to remember a handful of sources, but, as you continue on in your academic career, you may have a source list of 10, 20, or even more sources for a single paper. Getting in the habit of keeping track of your sources by using a research journal will help you to keep your information organized and make writing your paper much less work.

Keeping a research journal is simple. First, create a new Word document. As you do your research, take note of the correct citation of each source. Write a short summary of the source, including any important notes (ie this source contains a lot of data). Finally, write any quotes that stand out. Make sure to put the quotes in quotation marks and add the in-text citation at the end of the quote. That way, when you are writing your paper, you can easily copy and paste in a quote from a source with no worries about plagiarism!

Tip: You might find it helpful to use a table to keep track of your sources. Simply put each source in a different row of the table. Another option is to add a dividing line after each source. This helps keep sources visually separated on the page.

Here is a Sample Research Journal:

Example Research Journal

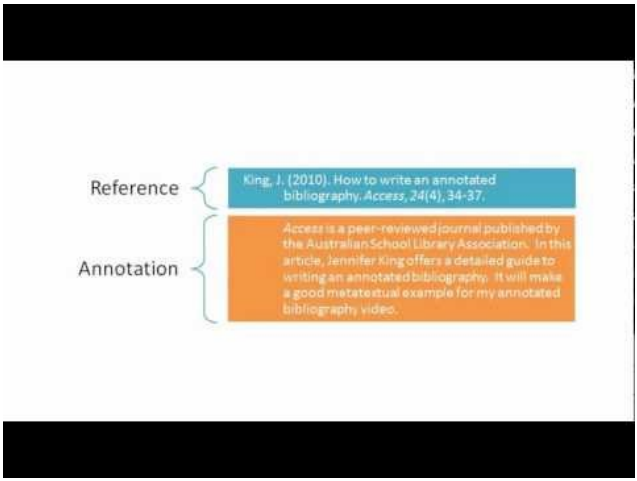
Research_Journal_Non_Profit_Assignment-1.pdf
Download (181.8 kB)

Annotated Bibliography

Another way students are often asked to record their research is an Annotated Bibliography. In an annotated bibliography, a writer includes certain information about each source he/she plans to use in his/her paper. The Annotated Bibliography should include the following:

- The correct citation of the source as it would appear in the Works Cited page
- A summary of the source
- An evaluation of the source–this includes information about how the source adds to the author's understanding of the topic and/or how the author might utilize this source in the final paper, as well as thoughts about the reliability, credibility, etc of the source.

Watch this short video for a quick overview of what an annotated bibliography is and why it's important to write one:



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://oer.pressbooks.pub/theworryfreewriter/?p=76

33. Assignment: Annotated Bibliography

For this assignment, you will be going on a hunt for more information about your non profit and the problem it solves. Your job is to learn something new about your organization–you are NOT simply trying to find sources that support your point of view. Find at least five sources about your topic. Your sources should include the following:

1. an article from the YC Library database,
2. a website,
3. a blog or an interview,
4. an article from a magazine or newspaper (can be located online),
5. and a video.

Note that a website can only be used ONE TIME! In other words, you cannot use the same website to meet the requirements for a blog, a website, and a video.

A good strategy for research is to try to find sources that help you flesh out each of the parts of your paper. Look for information on the problem, the non-profit, and the solution. For instance, if I had chosen the Marine Conservation Alliance as my non-profit, my sources might include the following:

1. The MCA official Website: http://marineconservationalliance.org/

2. This Ted Talk video by Dan Barber discussing the problem and

how a business is solving the problem: https://www.ted.com/talks/dan_barber_how_i_fell_in_love_with_a_fish?language=en

3. This online article explaining the issue and discussing some other non-profits working to solve it: https://foodtank.com/news/2017/10/sustainable-fisheries-list/

4. This interview: https://www.worldfishing.net/news101/Comment/interviews/heralding-a-new-era-of-transparency-and-engagement

5. And an article from the YC library databases on Fish Farming.

Here's a template you can use for your Bibliography:

Examples

Annotated_Bibliography_Template.docx
Download (12.6 kB)

Here's a sample Annotated Bibliography based on the Fish Farm example above:

Examples

101_Annotated_Bibliography_Fish_Farm_Example.pdf
Download (151.5 kB)

34. What is Argument?

Usually when we think of argument, we think of fighting–two people having a disagreement, which can often get heated. This is a typical Western view of argument. However, as we all know, these kinds of argument are not usually effective. In fact, they usually end with hurt feelings and no resolution because the aim of both parties is just to get their own way—to win the fight. These types of arguments don't lead us to consider other points of view, look critically at our own thinking, or learn anything new.

Image free to use.

What is Argument?

In academic writing, especially at the college level, students are expected to not only understand ideas, but to create their own

arguments. In academic terms, an argument is simply an assertion of your point of view. Speeches, parades, art, the choices you make in the voting booth, even where you spend your money are all examples of these types of arguments.

Academic argument is different from our typical conception of arguments in several ways. First, its purpose is not to win, but to offer others the opportunity to consider our point of view. Academic arguments give reasons, support positions, and show respect for the audience. Obviously, these types of arguments require more thought!

Normally positions are stated about controversial issues, issues about which people have strong feelings and sometimes disagree vehemently: practice, the best way to achieve goals, fundamental values and beliefs. A controversy is not simply a scandalous topic or one in which there are clearly defined 'sides.' A controversial topic is one in which there is no obvious right answer, no truth that everyone accepts, no single authority whom everyone trusts. Finding the facts will not settle these disputes because, ultimately, they are matters of opinion and judgment.

While your goal is not to "win" an argument, it is possible to convince others to consider a particular position seriously or to accept or reject a position by giving readers strong reasons and solid support while anticipating opposing arguments.

Important tips to remember for the future:

1. If you do have a controversial topic (now or in the future), instead of searching for sources that support your point of view, try finding the most credible sources you can to prove you're wrong. Read those sources with an open mind–with the goal to LEARN from someone else, not simply to refute their arguments. This practice will challenge you to better articulate your own position, help you better understand other perspectives, and, ultimately, make your argument stronger. Remember, there are many people who are more educated and more researched than you who disagree with you and have good reasons for doing so. Perhaps there is something important for you to consider in their position.

2. Pay attention to the language used in your sources and in your own paper. If you find that the argument is based only on emotion, on hearsay, or resorts to name calling (ie "Those who don't agree with this position are… ignorant or uneducated or biased or right-wing or left-wing, etc), chances are the argument is not valid at all. The strongest arguments are based on verifiable facts. Make sure both your supporting sources AND your own argument are supported with strong factual evidence, rather than name-calling or generalizations.

35. What is a Proposal?

A proposal is one type of argument. Because an integral part of a non-profit is determining the best way to solve a problem, learning more about proposals is important.

Proposals are vital to our lives. They give us an effective way to address the problems affecting us every day. Over the past several weeks, you have been writing about a non-profit organization that you care about. Your organization is addressing a problem in your community, and this paper is an opportunity to help them do something to solve that problem by sharing with others who they are and what they do.

Writing a solid proposal requires a critical questioning attitude. To solve a problem, you need to see it anew, to look at it from new perspectives and in new contexts. A proposal tries to convince readers that its way of analyzing and creatively solving the problem makes sense. The writer must be sensitive to reader's needs and different perspectives.

Components of a Proposal

A proposal includes the following elements:

1. Introducing the problem: Whether you are reminding your readers of a problem that they are well aware of or illuminating a problem they may not know exists, you should provide a clear description of the problem. You must both show that the problem exists and that it is worthy of attention. For example, if you are writing about Habitat for Humanity, you want to show readers that there are people who desperately need this organization. Convince your readers that this is a problem that needs solving.
2. Presenting the Proposed Solution: Your goal here is to convince readers that supporting the organization you're discussing is the best way to solve the problem you've described. Give readers some background information about

the organization and tell them about the organization's mission.

3. Arguing Directly for the Proposed Solution: Here your goal is to show readers both that the organization will effectively address the need/solve the problem, and that it's workable for them to support the organization (cost-effective, feasible, and more promising than the alternatives). So, not only are you showing readers conclusively that this organization is solving the problem, you are showing them how they can become involved in that solution.
4. Counterarguing: As you write your proposal, you should be continually aware of readers' possible objections, questions, and ideas for alternative solutions. You may either accommodate these objections by modifying your own argument OR refute the objections. You may also want to acknowledge other solutions–this shows your knowledge of the situation and adds to your credibility.

36. Assignment: Argument Outline

For this assignment, you are going to create an outline for your argument paper. Your outline should be based on the research you compiled, as well as your knowledge of the components of an argument and a proposal.

Thesis/Outline Template

1. Introduction
    1. Hook
    2. Introduce the organization
    3. State your thesis–remember, your thesis must make an argument about your organization and the problem it solves.
2. Background information
    1. History of organization–how and why it started
    2. Problem–what problem does the organization solve? Use facts, statistics, and stories to prove there is a problem.
3. Argument
    1. How is the organization solving the problem? Use facts, statistics, and stories to show how the organization you chose is solving the problem.
    2. Tell readers how to support your organization and why they should do so
4. Counterarguing– either address common concerns with your organization or with the problem OR acknowledge other organizations doing similar work and explain why you think yours is doing the best job
5. Conclusion

Sample Outline:

Argument Sample Outline Community Garden

37. Mini-Grammar Review: Commas

Commas are to readers as road signs are to drivers. Just as a driver might take a wrong turn if a sign is missing or misplaced, a reader cannot traverse a sentence meaningfully when commas are not properly in place.

Image by Glo licensed public domain.

Using Commas with Introductory Words, Phrases, and Clauses

Commas set introductory words, phrases, and clauses apart from the rest of a sentence. This separation serves to signal a reader to pause and to give words a chance to have meaning without interference from other words.

- Afterward, fans came backstage and surrounded the actors and actresses.

Using Commas in a Series

A series is a list embedded in a sentence with a conjunction, typically the word "and," between the last two items in the list. Without the commas, a series can be quite confusing.

- Penny's costume included a long blue dress, a red bonnet, black lace-up shoes, a heavy gold pendant on a chain, and a very-full petticoat.

Using Commas in Compound Sentences

When a sentence is made up of two independent clauses joined by a **coordinating conjunction** (*and*, *but*, *for*, *nor/or*, *so*, *yet*), a comma is needed between the two clauses. Remember that an independent clause must have both a subject and a verb and be able to serve as a stand-alone sentence.

- Mitch arrived an hour early for the first rehearsal, and he spent the time looking through the costume closets.

Using Commas to Isolate Nonessential Words within a Sentence

To create interest and increase clarification, you may want to add words and phrases to basic sentences. These additional pieces often function as add-ons that are not essential to the core meaning of the sentence and do not change the meaning of the sentence. You should separate such words and phrases from the rest of the sentence. Some examples of **nonessential words** include adjective phrases and clauses, words of direct address, interjections, and appositives.

Adjective Phrases and Clauses

Some adjective phrases and clauses are essential to the meaning of a sentence and some are not. If they are essential, no comma is needed. If the meaning of the sentence would be intact if the phrase or clause were removed, a comma is needed. You can identify

adjective clauses since they often begin with the relative pronouns *where*, *when*, *which*, *who*, *whom*, *whose*, or *that*.

- *To Kill a Mockingbird*, which was Malik's first play, lasted almost two hours.

A comma is needed because, even without the adjective phrase, the reader would know that the play lasted for two hours.

Words of Direct Address

Some sentences name the person being spoken to. A person's name that is used in this way is called a **noun in direct address**. Since naming the person does not change the meaning of the sentence, you should separate such a name from the rest of the sentence.

- Your performance, Penny, was absolutely amazing!

Interjections

Some words interrupt the flow of a sentence but do not actually change the meaning of the sentence. Such words are known as **interjections** and should be set apart from the rest of the sentence with commas. Aside from "yes" and "no," most interjections express a sudden emotion.

- Yes, I am going to the Saturday matinee performance.
- I suppose you will think it is a problem if I don't arrive until a few minutes before the curtain goes up, huh?
- There is a chance, drat, that I might miss the first few minutes.

Appositives

Appositives are nouns or noun phrases that restate an immediately preceding noun or noun phrase.

- Malik's first play, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, had six performances.

Using Commas with Coordinate Adjectives

You should place a comma between **coordinate adjectives** that are not joined with the word "and." Coordinate adjectives are double adjectives and can be joined with the word "and," rearranged, or both and still work fine.

- Atticus is a good role for Malik since Malik is a tall**,** stately guy.

Do not use commas between cumulative adjectives. **Cumulative adjectives** build on each other, modify the next one in line, and do not make sense if rearranged.

- Atticus Finch is a dedicated defense attorney.

This is a cumulative adjective situation because it would not work to rearrange the adjectives to say "defense dedicated attorney" or "dedicated and defense attorney." Therefore, no commas are needed in this example; the adjective "defense" modifies "attorney" and the adjective "dedicated" modifies "defense attorney."

Using Commas with Dialogue and Direct Quotations

You should use a comma prior to or just after the quotations in dialogue. Also, use a comma before a **direct quotation** when preceded by a verb such as declares, says, or writes.

- **Comma before dialogue:** Jem said**,** "There goes the meanest man that ever took a breath of life."
- **Comma after dialogue:** "The one thing that doesn't abide by majority rule is a person's conscience**,**" said Atticus Finch.
- **No comma needed before or after a direct quotation that is not preceded by a verb:** According to Miss Maudie Atkinson, Atticus "can make somebody's will so airtight you can't break it."

Dates, Addresses, Geographic Names

When a date is written in month–day–year order in isolation, you need to use a comma between the day and year.

- December 25, 1962

When a date is written in month–day–year order within a sentence and does not fall at the end of the sentence, you need to use a comma between the day and year and between the year and the rest of the sentence.

- On December 25, 1962, the movie *To Kill a Mockingbird* opened in theaters.

When an address is written within running text, commas are needed between the city and state as well as between each of the "lines" of the address and between the address and the rest of the sentence if the address does not fall at the end of the sentence.

- Annual performances of *To Kill a Mockingbird* are performed in the Old Courthouse Museum, Courthouse Square, 31 N. Alabama Ave., Monroeville, AL 36460, near where author Harper Lee grew up.

Use a comma after each item within a place name when the place name is used in running text, even when it is not part of a complete address.

- Atticus Finch lived and worked in the fictitious city of Maycomb, Alabama, which many assume is patterned somewhat after Monroeville, Alabama, where the author grew up.

Company Names

Company names that include "incorporated" or "limited" (or the like) require a comma between the name and "Inc." or "Ltd." only when a comma is placed there as part of the official company name. Check for letterhead or the company's website for clarification on its preferred usage.

When "incorporated" or "limited" is part of a company name

within a sentence, a comma is needed between the word and the rest of the sentence only when a comma precedes it.

- Citigroup, Inc., is making some noise in the banking industry lately.
- Invesco Ltd. started out slowly in that sector of the market.

Titles That Go with Names

Use commas to set off descriptive titles that follow names. However, don't use a comma before "Jr." or "III" (or the like) unless you know the person prefers a comma.

- Atticus Finch**,** attorney-at-law
- John Hale Finch**,** MD
- Walter Cunningham Jr.

Within text, include a comma both before and after the descriptive title to set it off from the whole sentence.

- Atticus Finch**,** attorney-at-law**,** at your service.

Numbers

In numbers with more than four digits, begin at the right and add a comma after every third digit. In a four-digit number, a comma is omitted in page and line numbers, addresses, and years, and it is optional in other cases. No commas are used in numbers with less than four digits. Numbers are treated exactly the same when used in text.

Using Commas to Avoid Confusion

Sometimes you simply have to use a comma to avoid confusion. For example, when a word is removed for effect, a comma can sometimes make up for the missing word.

- To perform is a skill; to transform**,** art.

When two like or nearly like words are placed side by side, a comma can sometimes help clarify the intended meaning.

- The whole cast came walking in, in full costume.

Sometimes you will need to use a comma so the reader understands how the words are to be grouped to attain the author's desired meaning. Read the following example without the comma and note the difference.

- Fans who can, come each year to see the annual *To Kill a Mockingbird* performance.

Content slightly modified from "Using Commas Properly" by Saylor Academy and licensed under CC BY NC SA.

38. Fallacies

Using ethos, pathos, and logos in an argument does not mean that the argument made is necessarily a good one. In academia, especially, we care a lot about making our arguments logically sound; we care about logos. We seek to create work that is rooted in rational discourse. We seek to produce our own rational discourse. We value carefully researched, methodically crafted work. Thus, to be a strong academic writer, you should seek to avoid logical fallacies, which are flaws in reasoning.

Fallacy means false. Think of the concept of a logical fallacy as something that makes an argument problematic, open to attack, or weak. In academic discourse, logical fallacies are seen as failures – as things you will want to avoid.

Thinking about fallacies can be confusing because you see them all the time: in advertising, in conversation, in political discourse. Fallacies are everywhere. But as students of rhetoric, part of your job is to spend time identifying these fallacies in both your own writing and in others' as a way to avoid them.

This video provides some interesting examples from politics and popular culture:

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://oer.pressbooks.pub/theworryfreewriter/?p=88

Logical Fallacies – A Short List

1. **Generalization** – A *conclusion or judgement made from insufficient evidence.* When one piece of evidence or information is used to make a broad conclusion or statement.
2. **Cherry picking** – *Picking and choosing only some of the available evidence in order to present only points most favorable to your point of view.* If someone knowingly chooses certain (favorable) pieces of information and conveniently ignores less favorable information, then the argument is not supported by all of the available research.
3. **Straw Man –** *An oversimplification of an opposing perspective so that it becomes easy to attack.* This is unfair and illogical

because when one oversimplifies or inaccurately represents an argument and refutes that oversimplified version, one is not actually addressing the argument.

4. **Red Herring –** *Changing topics to avoid the point being discussed.* This is an argument tactic in which one attempts to change the conversation, often by bringing up information that is not relevant to the claim or point being debated, in order to try to control the conversation. This can be a way to avoid having to address or answer the question at hand, and it harms the quality of an argument.
5. **Ad Hominem** – *It is a personal attack rather than a way of engaging with someone's ideas.* For example: "You are an idiot! That's why you're wrong!" This type of logical fallacy occurs when an arguer attacks or insults *the person* making opposing arguments instead of attacking the ideas, the logic, or the evidence within the opposing argument itself. It is a personal attack rather than a way of engaging with someone's ideas.
6. **Ad Populum** – A *misused reference to popularly accepted values.* For instance: "This is about freedom and righteousness, and if you believe in those things, then you should believe my argument." This is an example of **misused ethos** – when the author is referencing the values that the audience cares about so that they think only about the values and not about the content of the argument (or, likely, the fact that there is little intellectual substance in what is being said).
7. **Either/or** – – *This is an argument that attempts to create a situation of absolutes with no options in between.* For example: "Either we intervene or we are basically no better than the Nazis." This thinking is fallacious because it assumes that there are only two options, with nothing in between.
8. **Slippery Slope –** *This is a fallacy that assumes that one thing is going to have a series of consequences or effects–often leading to a worst-case scenario.* For example: "If we let this happen, then <u>that</u> will happen and then the worst possible thing will happen." It is false reasoning because 1) it's impossible to

predict the future, 2) it is illogical to suggest that one action will always necessarily lead to the worst possible outcome, and 3) it assumes a very specific chain of future events. This "if we let this happen there will be some horrible end" is **misuse of cause/effect reasoning**, often with some pathos (fear) sprinkled in.

When you are reading others' arguments and revising your own, see if any of their reasoning is actually one of these fallacies of logic.

You will find a longer list of Logical Fallacies Here

As you draft ideas for your own arguments, test each of your reasons against these definitions: have you used any of these fallacies to build your reasoning? If so, keep revising your line of reasoning!

39. Assignment: Argument Draft

For your assignment this week, your goal is to write a draft of your paper arguing that your non-profit organization meets the particular need in the community better than any other organization. You want to show your readers that the organization not only is effective, but that it is worthy of their support. That includes, of course, showing readers ways that they can get involved. Make sure you follow the outline you created in the last assignment to keep your argument organized and focused.

Include quotes from your sources to support your ideas. Remember, each source included on your Works Cited page MUST be cited at least one time in the body of the paper. A good rule of thumb is to include a quote in each paragraph. Quotes should make up no more than 20% of the content of your paper, though, so it's a good idea to write out your argument with your own ideas first. That way, the bulk of your argument is your own.

Here's a sample draft:

Examples

Example_Paper_Non_Profit_Argument_Proposal.pdf
Download (107.3 kB)

PART VI

WRITING ABOUT POETRY

40. Introduction to Literature

When is the last time you read a book for fun? If you were to classify that book, would you call it fiction or literature? This is an interesting separation, with many possible reasons for it. One is that "fiction" and "literature" are regarded as quite different things. "Fiction," for example, is what people read for enjoyment. "Literature" is what they read for school. Or "fiction" is what living people write and is about the present. "Literature" was written by people (often white males) who have since died and is about times and places that have nothing to do with us. Or "fiction" offers everyday pleasures, but "literature" is to be honored and respected, even though it is boring. Of course, when we put anything on a pedestal, we remove it from everyday life, so the corollary is that literature is to be honored and respected, but it is not to be read, certainly not by any normal person with normal interests.

Sadly, it is the guardians of literature, that is, of the classics, who have done so much to take the life out of literature, to put it on a pedestal and thereby to make it an irrelevant aspect of American life. People study literature because they love literature. They certainly don't do it for the money. But what happens too often, especially in colleges, is that teachers forget what it was that first interested them in the study of literature. They forget the joy that they first felt (and perhaps still feel) as they read a new novel or a poem or as they reread a work and saw something new in it. Instead they erect formidable walls around these literary works, giving the impression that the only access to a work is through deep learning and years of study. Such study is clearly important for scholars, but this kind of scholarship is not the only way, or even necessarily the best way, for most people to approach literature. Instead it makes the literature seem inaccessible. It makes the literature seem like the province of scholars. "Oh, you have to be

smart to read that," as though Shakespeare or Dickens or Woolf wrote only for English teachers, not for general readers.

What is Literature?

In short, literature evokes imaginative worlds through the conscious arrangement of words that tell a story. These stories are told through different genres, or types of literature, like novels, short stories, poetry, drama, and the essay. Each genre is associated with certain conventions. In this text, we will study poetry, short fiction, drama, and even personal narratives.

Some Misconceptions about Literature

Of course, there are a number of misconceptions about literature that have to be gotten out of the way before anyone can enjoy it. One misconception is that literature is full of **hidden meanings**. There are certainly occasional works that contain hidden meanings. The biblical book of *Revelation*, for example, was written in a kind of code, using images that had specific meanings for its early audience but that we can only recover with a great deal of difficulty. Most literary works, however, are not at all like that. Perhaps an analogy will illustrate this point. When I take my car to my mechanic because something is not working properly, he opens the hood and we both stand there looking at the engine. But after we have looked for a few minutes, he is likely to have seen what the problem is, while I could look for hours and never see it. We are looking at the same thing. The problem is not hidden, nor is it in some secret code.

It is right there in the open, accessible to anyone who knows how to "read" it, which my mechanic does and I do not. He has been taught how to "read" automobile engines and he has practiced "reading" them. He is a good "close reader," which is why I continue to take my car to him.

The same thing is true for readers of literature. Generally authors want to communicate with their readers, so they are not likely to hide or disguise what they are saying, but reading literature also requires some training and some practice. Good writers use language very carefully, and readers must learn how to be sensitive to that language, just as the mechanic must learn to be sensitive to the appearances and sounds of the engine. Everything that the writer wants to say, and much that the writer may not be aware of, is there in the words. We simply have to learn how to read them.

Another popular misconception is that a literary work has a **single "meaning"** (and that only English teachers know how to find that meaning). There is an easy way to dispel this misconception. Just go to a college library and find the section that holds books on Shakespeare. Choose one play, *Hamlet*, for example, and see how many books there are about it, all by scholars who are educated, perceptive readers. Can it be the case that one of these books is correct and all the others are mistaken? And if the correct one has already been written, why would anyone need to write another book about the play? The answer is that there is no single correct way to read a good piece of literature.

Again, let me use an analogy to illustrate this point. Suppose that everyone at a meeting were asked to describe a person who was standing in the middle of the room. Imagine how many different descriptions there would be, depending on where the viewer sat in relation to the person. Furthermore, an optometrist in the crowd might focus on the person's glasses; a hair stylist might focus on the person's haircut; someone who sells clothing might focus on the style of dress; a podiatrist might focus on the person's feet. Would any of these descriptions be incorrect? Not necessarily, but they would be determined by the viewers' perspectives. They might

also be determined by such factors as the viewers' ages, genders, or ability to move around the person being viewed, or by their previous acquaintance with the subject. So whose descriptions would be correct? Conceivably all of them, and if we put all of these correct descriptions together, we would be closer to having a full description of the person.

This is most emphatically not to say, however, that all descriptions are correct simply because each person is entitled to his or her opinion. If the podiatrist is of the opinion that the person is five feet, nine inches tall, the podiatrist could be mistaken. And even if the podiatrist actually measures the person, the measurement could be mistaken. Everyone who describes this person, therefore, must offer not only an opinion but also a basis for that opinion. "My feeling is that this person is a teacher" is not enough. "My feeling is that this person is a teacher because the person's clothing is covered with chalk dust and because the person is carrying a stack of papers that look like they need grading" is far better, though even that statement might be mistaken.

So it is with literature. As we read, as we try to understand and interpret, we must deal with the text that is in front of us; but we must also recognize both that language is slippery and that each of us individually deals with it from a different set of perspectives. Not all of these perspectives are necessarily legitimate, and we are always liable to be misreading or misinterpreting what we see. Furthermore, it is possible that contradictory readings of a single work will both be legitimate, because literary works can be as complex and multi-faceted as human beings. It is vital, therefore, that in reading literature we abandon both the idea that any individual's reading of a work is the "correct" one and the idea that there is one simple way to read any work. Our interpretations may, and probably should, change according to the way we approach the work. If we read *War and Peace* as teenagers, then in middle age, and then in old age, we might be said to have read three different books. Thus, multiple interpretations, even contradictory

interpretations, can work together to give us a better understanding of a work.

Why Reading Literature is Important

Reading literature can teach us new ways to read, think, imagine, feel, and make sense of our own experiences. Literature forces readers to confront the complexities of the world, to confront what it means to be a human being in this difficult and uncertain world, to confront other people who may be unlike them, and ultimately to confront themselves.

The relationship between the reader and the world of a work of literature is complex and fascinating. Frequently when we read a work, we become so involved in it that we may feel that we have become part of it. "I was really into that novel," we might say, and in one sense that statement can be accurate. But in another sense it is clearly inaccurate, for actually we do not enter the book so much as the book enters us; the words enter our eyes in the form of squiggles on a page which are transformed into words, sentences, paragraphs, and meaningful concepts in our brains, in our imaginations, where scenes and characters are given "a local habitation and a name." Thus, when we "get into" a book, we are actually "getting into" our own mental conceptions that have been produced by the book, which, incidentally, explains why so often readers are dissatisfied with cinematic or television adaptations of literary works.

In fact, though it may seem a trite thing to say, writers are close observers of the world who are capable of communicating their visions, and the more perspectives we have to draw on, the better able we should be to make sense of our lives. In these terms, it makes no difference whether we are reading a Homeric poem, a twelfth-century Japanese novel like *The Tale of Genji*, or a novel by Dickens. The more different perspectives we get, the better.

And it must be emphasized that we read such works not only to be well-rounded (whatever that means) or to be "educated" or for antiquarian interest. We read them because they have something to do with us, with our lives. Whatever culture produced them, whatever the gender or race or religion of their authors, they relate to us as human beings; and all of us can use as many insights into being human as we can get. Reading is itself a kind of experience, and while we may not have the time or the opportunity or it may be physically impossible for us to experience certain things in the world, we can experience them through sensitive reading. So literature allows us to broaden our experiences.

Reading also forces us to focus our thoughts. The world around us is so full of stimuli that we are easily distracted. Unless we are involved in a crisis that demands our full attention, we flit from subject to subject. But when we read a book, even a book that has a large number of characters and covers many years, the story and the writing help us to focus, to think about what they show us in a concentrated manner. When I hold a book, I often feel that I have in my hand another world that I can enter and that will help me to understand the everyday world that I inhabit. Though it may sound funny, some of my best friends live in books, and no matter how frequently I visit them, each time I learn more about them and about myself.

Literature invites us to meet interesting characters and to visit interesting places, to use our imagination and to think about things that might otherwise escape our notice, to see the world from perspectives that we would otherwise not have.

Watch this video for a lively overview of how and why we read literature. (*Please note that we will not be reading the texts the speaker mentions in the video in this course.*)

How and Why We Read: Crash Course English Literature #1

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://oer.pressbooks.pub/theworryfreewriter/?p=93

How to Read Literature

1. Read with a pen in hand! Jot down questions, highlight things you find significant, mark confusing passages, look up unfamiliar words/references, and record first impressions.
2. Think critically to form a response.

- The more you know about a story, the more pleasure your reading will provide as you uncover the hidden elements that create the theme of the piece.
- Address your own biases and compare your own experiences with those expressed in the piece.

- Test your positions and thoughts about the piece with what others think by doing research.

While you will have your own individual connection to a piece based on your life experiences, interpreting literature is not a willy nilly process. Each piece has an author who had a purpose in writing the piece–you want to uncover that purpose. As the speaker in the video you watched about how to read literature notes, you, as a reader, also have a role to play. Sometimes you may see something in the text that speaks to you–whether or not the author intended that piece to be there, it still matters to you. However, when writing about literature, it's important that our observations can be supported by the text itself. Make sure you aren't reading into the text something that isn't there. Value the author for who he/she is and appreciate his/her experiences, while attempting to create a connection with yourself and your experiences.

Attributions:

41. Introduction to Poetry

Why Write About Poetry?

There are many reasons an instructor might ask you to write about literature in a composition classroom. For one, learning to write about literature is an engaging way to learn to make a text-based argument. Secondly, writing about literature can help you better understand what you are reading. Learning to read literature critically requires the same steps as learning to read academic texts, like looking up words you don't understand, researching context, asking questions, and taking notes. Last, but certainly not least, writing about literature can help you to enjoy it more!

Generally, English teachers begin introducing this process to students with the genre of poetry. Poetry tends to be shorter than other genres, like short fiction and drama. Because of this, it can be easier to digest and analyze.

Steps to Writing About Poetry

Step 1: Choose a Poem

The first step to writing about poetry might seem fairly obvious–you must choose a poem to write about. It's important to choose a poem that interests you. If you must spend a few weeks writing about a poem, at least choose one that you enjoy. It could be that you personally relate to the poem, or you might just like the rhythm of it.

For the purposes of illustration, I am going to share an example that I used for a class demonstration. Here is William Shakespeare's "Sonnet 66":

Tired with all these, for restful death I cry,
As to behold desert a beggar born,
And needy nothing trimm'd in jollity,
And purest faith unhappily forsworn,
And gilded honour shamefully misplaced,
And maiden virtue rudely strumpeted,
And right perfection wrongfully disgraced,
And strength by limping sway disabled
And art made tongue-tied by authority,
And folly, doctor-like, controlling skill,
And simple truth miscalled simplicity,
And captive good attending captain ill:
Tired with all these, from these would I be gone,
Save that, to die, I leave my love alone.

Step 2: Read and Respond

The second step in writing about poetry is reading and responding to the poem. While many students might be apprehensive about reading poetry, reading poetry should be an enjoyable experience. Watch this short video of Billy Collins' poem, "Introduction to Poetry":

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Poetry is written from the heart, and it speaks to the heart. Poetry allows us to hear another person's voice in a beautiful way that can illuminate our own experiences, as well as create empathy for the different experiences of others.

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.

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.

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. This is why 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.

How to Read Poetry

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Many a well-meaning English teacher has ruined poetry for students by making reading poetry a drawn out and difficult search for a hidden meaning. While some poetry does have some interesting hidden meaning, poets usually write a poem to express a feeling to an audience.

Be a Good Listener

The first step in reading poetry is simply to listen. 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 *em*body 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.

Note the Title

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.

The First Reading

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:

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?

These initial questions will emotionally prepare you to be a good listener. Remember, when you read a poem the first time, don't try to dissect it. Instead, enjoy it first. Think about how you enjoy music, for example. Listen to the song, the music of poetry first, and then take some time to figure out the meaning. You can use the elements of poetry to help you with this in your second read of the poem.

The Second Read: Elements of Poetry

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.

When reading poetry, it's important to keep in mind that every word counts. More so than in any other type of writing, it's important to pay attention to the author's use of words. Here are some general things to pay attention to when reading poetry.

Speaker vs Poet

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.

Remember that the speaker in the poem is not necessarily the author. The speaker is the voice of the poem. For example, a poet might write a poem about a historical figure speaking–the speaker in the poem is not the author, but the historical figure who is speaking. Pay attention to clues in the text that tell you who is speaking in the poem.

Diction and Tone

Tone is created by the word choices the author makes, which is called the author's diction. One example of how an author uses diction to create tone is denotative and connotative language. For example, the words "belly button," "navel," and "umbilicus" all refer to the same thing, but they all have different connotations that reflect the speaker's attitude toward it. You might also look for unusual words/phrases. Think about how the meaning of a word may have changed over time–especially important when reading poetry from before your lifetime. Finally, consider how the words are meant to sound. Do they sound playful? Angry? Confidential? Ironic?

Figurative Language

Figurative language is an author's creative use of language, often to create a memorable image for the reader. Here are four common types of figurative language:

- Simile –uses like, as, than, appears, or seems to compare two different things (She sings like a bird.)
- Metaphor—compares two unrelated things without the use of like or as (She's a train wreck!)
- Personification—gives human characteristics to an inanimate object (Umbrellas clothe the beach.)
- Allusion–References to other works, historical events and figures, etc. (You're such a Scrooge!)

Symbolism

Symbolism can be an important aspect of poetry. Symbols are images that are loaded with significance. In order for something to be symbolic in a piece, it must mean something else in addition to its literal meaning. For example, an author might place a sad scene in the midst of a gloomy day. In this case, the day is actually gloomy, but it also represents the overall tone of gloom in the story/poem.

Some images are almost universal symbols. For example, a rose can symbolize love. A skeleton symbolizes death. Darkness and light and colors often have symbolic meaning, as well.

While symbolism is often present in poetry, it's important to remember that just because something could be symbolic of something else, that doesn't mean it actually is! Remember, poets aren't typically trying to hide their meaning from their readers. They are simply using language in creative ways to share their feelings.

Music of Poetry

Finally, it's important to pay attention to the structure and the patterns of sound in a poem. Note that each line of a poem is not necessarily a complete thought. The ways in which an author breaks the lines of a poem likely have a purpose. Likewise, stanzas, the "paragraphs" of a poem, often have strategic arrangements that can give the reader clues about the meaning of a poem. The way an author puts together each word, line, and stanza creates the rhythm of a poem.

In addition to the structure of the poem, look at the patterns of sound. Reading a poem aloud is a good way to highlight for yourself the music of poetry. Keep an eye (or ear!) out for the following:

- rhyme–when the ends of words sounds the same (sand, band, hand)
- alliteration–when words begin with the same sounds ("Bring me my bow of burning gold")
- assonance–when words have the same internal vowel sounds, but they don't actually rhyme (tide and mine)
- consonance–when words begin and end with the same consonant sounds (fail & feel, rough & roof)
- onomatopoeia–when a word sounds like what it is (hiss, buzz)

Need a little more help? This interactive lesson can help you learn more about the elements of poetry.

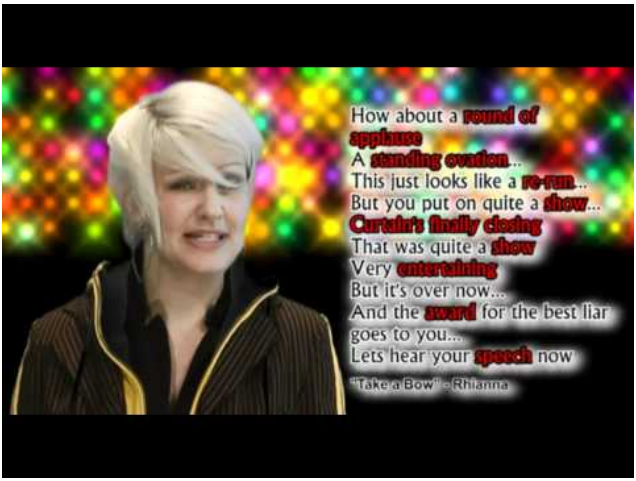
An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://oer.pressbooks.pub/theworryfreewriter/?p=95#h5p-40

Making Connections with the Poem

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, and diction.

Making connections 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. The idea is to come to an understanding of what the message of the poem is and how the author creates that message by using the elements of poetry.

I think you'll enjoy this fun video by Isabella Wallace. Aside from the crazy strand of hair in her eyes, she makes some great points about the correlation between songs and poetry that I think will help take some of the scariness out of analyzing poetry. Plus, her accent is pretty fun to listen to.



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Assignment

Choose a poem from the Poetry Anthology in the next chapter. Read it several times, keeping in mind what you've learned from the reading in this chapter. You might want to

read the poem out loud, as well. Think about what the poem means to you, and what you think the author was trying to convey. Write a short 1-2 page response to the poem.

Here are some pointers for getting started:

1. Read full sentences (if they exist in the poem) without stopping at the end of the line.

2. Look up words you do not know and write their definitions on the page.

3. Note recurring ideas or images—color code these with highlighters for visual recognition as you look at the poem on the page.

4. Determine formal patterns. Is there a regular rhythm? How would you describe it? Can it be characterized by the number of syllables in each line? If not, do you note a certain number of beats (moments where your voice emphasizes the sound) in the line? Are there rhyming sounds? Where do they occur?

5. What is the overarching effect of all these elements taken together? What do you think is the message conveyed by the poem?

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- *Shakespeare's "Sonnet 66" in the Public Domain.*

42. Poetry Anthology

Authors are listed in alphabetical order. To jump to an author and his/her work, simply click the link in the list below.

- Maya Angelou
- Elizabeth Barrett Browning
- Robert Browning
- Stephen Crane
- Emily Dickinson
- T. S. Eliot
- Robert Frost
- Joy Harjo
- Langston Hughes
- Marge Piercy
- Sylvia Plath
- Alberto Rios
- Edna St. Vincent Millay
- May Swenson
- Dylan Thomas
- Walt Whitman

Maya Angelou (1928-2014)

Maya Angelou was an American poet, memoirist, actress and an important figure in the American Civil Rights Movement. Angelou is known for her series of six autobiographies, starting with *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, (1969) which was nominated for a National Book Award and called her *magnum opus*. Her volume of poetry, *Just Give Me a Cool Drink of Water 'Fore I Diiie* (1971) was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize.

Angelou recited her poem, "On the Pulse of Morning" at President Bill Clinton's inauguration in 1993, the first poet to make an inaugural recitation since Robert Frost at John F. Kennedy's inauguration in 1961. She was highly honored for her body of work, including being awarded over 30 honorary degrees.

Angelou's first book, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sing*, describes her early life and her experience of confronting racism, a central feature of her work. She used the caged bird as a metaphor for the imprisoning nature of racial bigotry on her life.

At the time of her death, tributes to Angelou and condolences were paid by artists, entertainers, and world leaders, including President Barack Obama, whose sister had been named after Angelou, and former President Bill Clinton. Harold Augenbraum, from the National Book Foundation, said that Angelou's "legacy is one that all writers and readers across the world can admire and aspire to."

Interview with Oprah Winfrey "Caged Bird":

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"I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings"

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings Film:

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"Phenomenal Woman"

Listen to Maya Angelou recite "Phenomenal Woman":

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Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861)

Elizabeth Barrett Browning was a poet who inspired devotion. In the present day, it is worth remembering that some poets were celebrities on the level of modern day actors and musicians, with fan followings, fan letters, and requests for autographs. The public admired her politics as well as her artistry; she wrote abolitionist poems, and works such as "The Cry of the Children" (1842) are believed to have created popular support for child labor laws passed in 1844.

One of her admirers was the poet Robert Browning: six years younger than she was and not yet famous. In his first letter to her in January 1845 (over five hundred of their letters survive), he declares his love not only of her poems, but of her. At that point, Elizabeth had been an invalid for years, for some time confined in her room by a controlling father who refused to allow any of his twelve children to marry. Twenty months later, Robert and Elizabeth eloped (her father disowned her), traveling to Italy, where Elizabeth recovered some of her health and gave birth to their son in 1849.

During those early years, the love poems that she wrote to Robert became *Sonnets from the Portuguese*; unlike her other poetry, Elizabeth was hesitant at first to admit that she wrote the passionate poems, originally claiming that she had simply translated them from a Portuguese collection. She continued to write on a full range of topics, including the most popular work in her lifetime, the verse-novel Aurora Leigh. She died after another bout of illness in Florence, Italy, in the arms of her husband.

Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning:

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Sonnets From the Portuguese

Robert's nickname for Elizabeth was "my little Portuguese," making this collection all the sweeter. Sonnet 33 and 43 and the most famous of this collection of sonnets. Click here to read the rest of them.

XXXIII

Yes, call me by my pet-name! let me hear
The name I used to run at, when a child,
From innocent play, and leave the cowslips plied,
To glance up in some face that proved me dear
With the look of its eyes. I miss the clear
Fond voices which, being drawn and reconciled
Into the music of Heaven's undefiled,
Call me no longer. Silence on the bier,
While I call God—call God!—so let thy mouth
Be heir to those who are now exanimate.
Gather the north flowers to complete the south,
And catch the early love up in the late.
Yes, call me by that name,—and I, in truth,
With the same heart, will answer and not wait.

XLIII

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level of everyday's
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.

I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints,—I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life!—and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

Poems licensed under Public Domain.

Robert Browning (1812-1889)

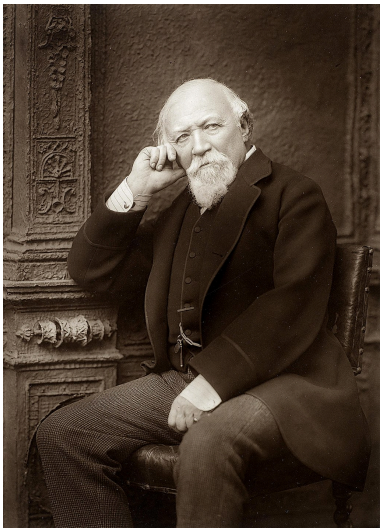

Image of Robert Browning in the Public Domain

Robert Browning was an unknown poet when he fell in love with one of the most famous poets of his time, Elizabeth Barrett. Their relationship was the stuff of love poems; he fell in love with her, although he had never met her, by reading her poetry. At the time, she was an invalid who was kept pretty much a prisoner by her tyrannical father, who had decided never to allow any of his twelve children to marry. After a secret correspondence over twenty months, they eloped to Italy. She recovered enough of her health that she was able to give birth to a son, and they lived in Italy until her death in 1861.

It was really only after her death that Robert Browning started to acquire fame as a poet, eventually becoming one of the most respected poets of the Victorian era. Although he wrote poems and plays on a range of topics (including his romance with Elizabeth Barrett), some of his most famous poems are his dramatic monologues, often with narrators who have extreme or even psychotic personalities. At first, audiences were startled by the dark humor and occasionally grotesque situations in many of the monologues, unaccustomed to reading about the human psyche in this way. In "My Last Duchess," the Duke addresses a silent representative of a Count whose daughter he wants to marry. The Duke is the epitome of an entitled snob, but his monologue slowly reveals that these qualities led him to become an unrepentant murderer, with a terrifying possessiveness that continues long after his first wife's death. "Porphyria's Lover" contains one of the best twists (the pun will become clear after reading it) in the monologues; it is again a study in psychotic self-absorption, as well as a technical triumph (try reading it without stopping at the end of the lines, but instead by stopping only at punctuation marks).

MEETING AT NIGHT

The gray sea and the long black land;
And the yellow half-moon large and low;
And the startled little waves that leap
In fiery ringlets from their sleep,
As I gain the cove with pushing prow,
And quench its speed i' the slushy sand.
Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach;

Three fields to cross till a farm appears;
A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch
And blue spurt of a lighted match,
And a voice less loud, through its joys and fears,
Than the two hearts beating each to each!

PARTING AT MORNING

Round the cape of a sudden came the sea,
And the sun looked over the mountain's rim:
And straight was a path of gold for him,
And the need of a world of men for me.

PORPHYRIA'S LOVER

The rain set early in to-night,

The sullen wind was soon awake,

It tore the elm-tops down for spite,

And did its worst to vex the lake:

I listened with heart fit to break.

>When glided in Porphyria; straight

She shut the cold out and the storm,

And kneeled and made the cheerless grate

Blaze up, and all the cottage warm;

Which done, she rose, and from her form

Withdrew the dripping cloak and shawl,

And laid her soiled gloves by, untied

Her hat and let the damp hair fall,

And, last, she sat down by my side

And called me. When no voice replied,

She put my arm about her waist,

And made her smooth white shoulder bare

And all her yellow hair displaced,

And, stooping, made my cheek lie there,

And spread, o'er all, her yellow hair,

Murmuring how she loved me—she

Too weak, for all her heart's endeavor,

To set its struggling passion free

From pride, and vainer ties dissever,

And give herself to me forever.

But passion sometimes would prevail,

Nor could to-night's gay feast restrain

A sudden thought of one so pale

For love of her, and all in vain:

So, she was come through wind and rain.

Be sure I looked up at her eyes

Happy and proud; at last I knew

Porphyria worshipped me; surprise

Made my heart swell, and still it grew

While I debated what to do.

That moment she was mine, mine, fair,

Perfectly pure and good: I found

A thing to do, and all her hair

In one long yellow string I wound

Three times her little throat around,

And strangled her. No pain felt she;

I am quite sure she felt no pain.

As a shut bud that holds a bee,

I warily oped her lids: again

Laughed the blue eyes without a stain.

And I untightened next the tress

About her neck; her cheek once more

Blushed bright beneath my burning kiss:

I propped her head up as before,

Only, this time my shoulder bore

Her head, which droops upon it still:

The smiling rosy little head,

So glad it has its utmost will,

That all it scorned at once is fled,

And I, its love, am gained instead!

Porphyria's love: she guessed not how

Her darling one wish would be heard.

And thus we sit together now,

And all night long we have not stirred,

And yet God has not said a word!

MY LAST DUCHESS

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now: Frà Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said
"Frà Pandolf" by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 't was not
Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps
Frà Pandolf chanced to say, "Her mantle laps
Over my lady's wrist too much," or "Paint
Must never hope to reproduce the faint
Half-flush that dies along her throat:" such stuff
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed: she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, 't was all one! My favor at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool

Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace—all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
Or blush, at least. She thanked men,—good! but thanked
Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
In speech—(which I have not)—to make your will
Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
Or there exceed the mark"—and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,
—E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose
Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet
The company below, then. I repeat,
The Count your master's known munificence
Is ample warrant that no just pretence
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

Stephen Crane (1871-1900)

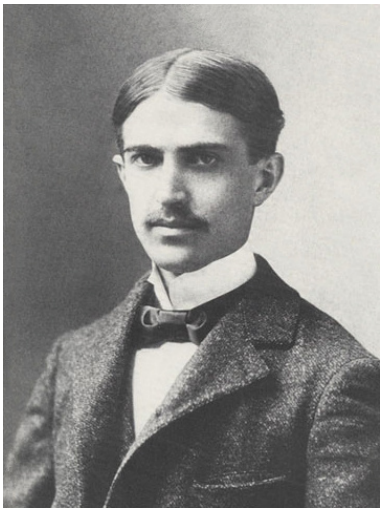

Image of Stephen Crane in the Public Domain

Stephen Crane was an American novelist, poet, and journalist who is now considered to be one of the most important writers in the vein of American realism. In fiction, Crane pioneered a naturalistic and unsentimental style of writing that was strongly influenced by Crane's experiences as a journalist. Crane's most well-known work, *The Red Badge of Courage*, is almost universally considered to be the first great novel of the American Civil War, due in part to its ability to describe the experience of warfare in vivid, psychological detail. Crane's other major novel, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, was less popular in its time, but it too is now esteemed as one of the most vivid portrayals of lower-class life in nineteenth century Manhattan in all of American literature. Crane's focus on realistic stories, which often ended tragically and without a clear sense of resolution, were contrary to the Romantic tastes of his times, and it would not be until the next generation of American realists, such as Theodore Dreiser and Frank Norris, that Crane's immense influence on the development of American literature would become fully apparent.

"War is Kind"

Do not weep, maiden, for war is kind.
Because your lover threw wild hands toward the sky
And the affrighted steed ran on alone,
Do not weep.
War is kind.

Hoarse, booming drums of the
regiment,
Little souls who thirst for fight,
These men were born to drill and die.
The unexplained glory files above
them,
Great is the battle-god, great, and his
kingdom—;
A field where a thousand corpses lie.

Do not weep, babe, for war is kind.
Because your father tumbled in the yellow
trenches,
Raged at his breast, gulped and died,
Do not weep.
War is kind.

Swift blazing flag of the regiment,
Eagle with crest of red and gold,
These men were born to drill and die.
Point for them the virtue of the slaughter,
Make plain to them the excellence of killing

And a field where a thousand corpses
lie.

Mother whose heart hung humble as a button
On the bright splendid shroud of your son,
Do not weep.
War is kind.

- *Poem in the Public Domain.*

Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)

Now one of the best-known American poets, Emily Dickinson was not known during her lifetime; ten poems were published anonymously, and the rest were published after her death. Dickinson's poetry resists easy categorization within literary movements. Traditionally Romantic themes such as nature and passion are presented in the startlingly direct—or even blunt—manner of Realism; while not truly Transcendentalist, the poems concern themselves with finding meaning in one's self, rather than in material possessions or earthly concerns; her unconventional use of language, punctuation, and approximate rhyme (or "slant rhyme')

rejects traditional styles in the way that later Modernists would embrace. In fact, it was only with the advent of Modernism that Dickinson's poems received the kind of widespread acclaim for their innovation and daring that would mark her as one of the most significant poets of the 19th century.

Although she spent most of her adult life in seclusion in her family's home in Amherst, Massachusetts, Dickinson maintained contact with the outside world through her letters, over a thousand of which have survived. After her death, Dickinson's family published the almost 1800 poems that she had written; most of the poems were not titled, and editors have had to choose how to organize the poems.

The poems often use common meter as a starting point (a pattern of an eight syllable line followed by a six syllable line, sometimes referred to as hymn meter), but develop other patterns—or lack of pattern—from there.

Dickinson's poems often surprise the reader: the poem "A Bird came down the Walk" begins with a Romantic subject—nature—but switches quickly to a slightly gross realism. Poems such as "Because I could not stop for Death" approach serious subjects with unexpected humor. Her unusual approaches to common themes such as love, death, nature, and identity remain engaging to readers to the present day.

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Poems

Just a few of her 1500+ poems are included here. Visit here to read the rest.

SUCCESS.

[Published in "A Masque of Poets"
at the request of "H.H.," the author's
fellow-townswoman and friend.]

Success is counted sweetest
By those who ne'er succeed.
To comprehend a nectar
Requires sorest need.

Not one of all the purple host
Who took the flag to-day
Can tell the definition,
So clear, of victory,

As he, defeated, dying,
On whose forbidden ear
The distant strains of triumph
Break, agonized and clear!

IN A LIBRARY.

A precious, mouldering pleasure 't is
To meet an antique book,
In just the dress his century wore;
A privilege, I think,

His venerable hand to take,

And warming in our own,
A passage back, or two, to make
To times when he was young.

His quaint opinions to inspect,
His knowledge to unfold
On what concerns our mutual mind,
The literature of old;

What interested scholars most,
What competitions ran
When Plato was a certainty.
And Sophocles a man;

When Sappho was a living girl,
And Beatrice wore
The gown that Dante deified.
Facts, centuries before,

He traverses familiar,
As one should come to town
And tell you all your dreams were true;
He lived where dreams were sown.

His presence is enchantment,
You beg him not to go;
Old volumes shake their vellum heads
And tantalize, just so.

THE WIFE.

She rose to his requirement, dropped
The playthings of her life

To take the honorable work
Of woman and of wife.

If aught she missed in her new day
Of amplitude, or awe,
Or first prospective, or the gold
In using wore away,

It lay unmentioned, as the sea
Develops pearl and weed,
But only to himself is known
The fathoms they abide.

XV.

I've seen a dying eye
Run round and round a room
In search of something, as it seemed,
Then cloudier become;
And then, obscure with fog,
And then be soldered down,
Without disclosing what it be,
'T were blessed to have seen.

THE CHARIOT.

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.

We paused before a house that seemed
A swelling of the ground;
The roof was scarcely visible,
The cornice but a mound.

Since then 't is centuries; but each
Feels shorter than the day
I first surmised the horses' heads
Were toward eternity.

A SERVICE OF SONG.

Some keep the Sabbath going to church;
I keep it staying at home,
With a bobolink for a chorister,
And an orchard for a dome.

Some keep the Sabbath in surplice;
I just wear my wings,

And instead of tolling the bell for church,
Our little sexton sings.

God preaches, — a noted clergyman, —
And the sermon is never long;
So instead of getting to heaven at last,
I'm going all along!

VII.

The bee is not afraid of me,
I know the butterfly;
The pretty people in the woods
Receive me cordially.

The brooks laugh louder when I come,
The breezes madder play.
Wherefore, mine eyes, thy silver mists?
Wherefore, O summer's day?

Poems in the Public Domain.

T. S. Eliot (1888-1965)

Image in the Public Domain

Eliot was born in St. Louis, the youngest of seven children. He attended Smith Academy in St. Louis, and went on to study at Harvard. After finishing his bachelor's degree, he began his graduate studies. During this time, he focused on Symbolist poetry. He tried to study abroad in Germany in 1914, but left the country early due to the threat of war.

Instead, he went to England, where he met Ezra Pound, who would have a profound influence on Eliot's work. While Eliot did occasionally return to the United States, he settled in England and eventually became a citizen of the country. It was Pound who helped Eliot publish "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (1915) in Poetry. The poem established Eliot's reputation as an experimental, intellectual writer.

Eliot possessed an amazing versatility. By the time he was 40, he had published over 20 books, which included volumes of poetry, criticism, and plays. His most notable work is *The Waste Land* (1922), which explores the disenfranchisement and ennui felt by the post-World War I, Lost Generation. The work is experimental in its fracture perspectives, play with tone and language, and disrupted narrative. His criticism, most specifically works from *The Sacred Wood*, such as "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1920), constructs a comprehensive literary theory, where the poet is not merely repeating popular ideas, but is interacting with an entire body of literary history, starting with Homer. By the time he won the

Nobel Prize in 1948, he was considered one of the most influential writers in the English language.

The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock

```
  S'io credesse che mia risposta fosse
A persona che mai tornasse al mondo,
Questa fiamma staria senza piu scosse.
Ma perciocche giammai di questo fondo
Non torno vivo alcun, s'i'odo il vero,
Senza tema d'infamia ti rispondo.
```

Let us go then, you and I,
When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherized upon a table;
Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,
The muttering retreats
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels
And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:
Streets that follow like a tedious argument
Of insidious intent
To lead you to an overwhelming question....
Oh, do not ask, "What is it?"
Let us go and make our visit.
In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.
The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-

panes
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,
Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,
Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,
And seeing that it was a soft October night,
Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.
And indeed there will be time
For the yellow smoke that slides along the street,
Rubbing its back upon the window panes;
There will be time, there will be time
To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet
There will be time to murder and create,
And time for all the works and days of hands
That lift and drop a question on your plate;
Time for you and time for me,
And time yet for a hundred indecisions,
And for a hundred visions and revisions,
Before the taking of a toast and tea.
In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.
And indeed there will be time
To wonder, "Do I dare?" and, "Do I dare?"
Time to turn back and descend the stair,
With a bald spot in the middle of my hair—
(They will say: "How his hair is growing thin!")
My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,
My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple
pin—
(They will say: "But how his arms and legs are thin!")
Do I dare
Disturb the universe?

In a minute there is time
For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.
For I have known them all already, known them all:
Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,
I have measured out my life with coffee spoons;
I know the voices dying with a dying fall
Beneath the music from a farther room.
So how should I presume?
And I have known the eyes already, known them all—
The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,
And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,
When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,
Then how should I begin
To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?
And how should I presume?
And I have known the arms already, known them all—
Arms that are braceleted and white and bare
(But in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair!)
Is it perfume from a dress
That makes me so digress?
Arms that lie along a table, or wrap about a shawl.
And should I then presume? And how should I begin? . . .
. . . . . .
Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow streets
And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes
Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows?
I should have been a pair of ragged claws
Scuttling across the floors of silent seas. . . . . .
And the afternoon, the evening, sleeps so peacefully!
Smoothed by long fingers,
Asleep... tired... or it malingers.
Stretched on the floor, here beside you and me.

Should I, after tea and cakes and ices,
Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis?
But though I have wept and fasted, wept and prayed,
Though I have seen my head (grown slightly bald)
brought in upon a platter,
I am no prophet—and here's no great matter;
I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker,
And I have seen the eternal
Footman hold my coat, and snicker,
And in short, I was afraid.
And would it have been worth it, after all,
After the cups, the marmalade, the tea,
Among the porcelain, among some talk of you and me,
Would it have been worth while,
To have bitten off the matter with a smile,
To have squeezed the universe into a ball
To roll it toward some overwhelming question,
To say: "I am Lazarus, come from the dead,
Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all"—
If one, settling a pillow by her head,
Should say: "That is not what I meant at all; That is not
it, at all."
And would it have been worth it, after all,
Would it have been worth while,
After the sunsets and the dooryards and the sprinkled
streets,
After the novels, after the teacups, after the skirts that
trail along the floor— And this, and so much more?—
It is impossible to say just what I mean!
But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on
a screen:
Would it have been worth while

If one, settling a pillow or throwing off a shawl,
And turning toward the window, should say:
"That is not it at all, That is not what I meant, at all." . . . .
. . . . .
No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;
Am an attendant lord, one that will do
To swell a progress, start a scene or two,
Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,
Deferential, glad to be of use,
Politic, cautious, and meticulous;
Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;
At times, indeed, almost ridiculous—
Almost, at times, the Fool.
I grow old... I grow old...
I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.
Shall I part my hair behind?
Do I dare to eat a peach?
I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach.
I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.
I do not think that they will sing to me.
I have seen them riding seaward on the waves
Combing the white hair of the waves blown back
When the wind blows the water white and black.
We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown
Till human voices wake us, and we drown.

- *Poem in the public domain.*

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"The Hollow Men"

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Robert Frost (1874-1963)

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Robert Lee Frost was an American poet, arguably the most recognized American poet of the twentieth century. Frost came of age during a time when modernism was the dominant movement in American and European literature. Yet, distinct from his contemporaries, Frost was a staunchly un-modern poet. He relied on the same poetic tropes that had been in use in English since poetry's inception: Rhyme, meter, and formalized stanzas, wryly dismissing free verse by claiming, "I'd just as soon play tennis with the net down."

Modernist poetry largely abandoned conventional poetic forms as obsolete. Frost powerfully demonstrated that they were not by composing verse that combined a clearly modern sensibility with traditional poetic structures. Accordingly, Frost has had as much or even more influence on present-day poetry—which has seen a resurgence in formalism—than many poets in his own time.

Frost endured much personal hardship, and his verse drama, "A Masque of Mercy" (1947), based on the story of Jonah, presents a deeply felt, largely orthodox, religious perspective, suggesting that man with his limited outlook must always bear with events and act mercifully, for action that complies with God's will can entail salvation. "Nothing can make injustice just but mercy," he wrote. Frost's enduring legacy goes beyond his strictly literary

contribution. He gave voice to American, and particularly New England virtues.

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THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveller, long I stood

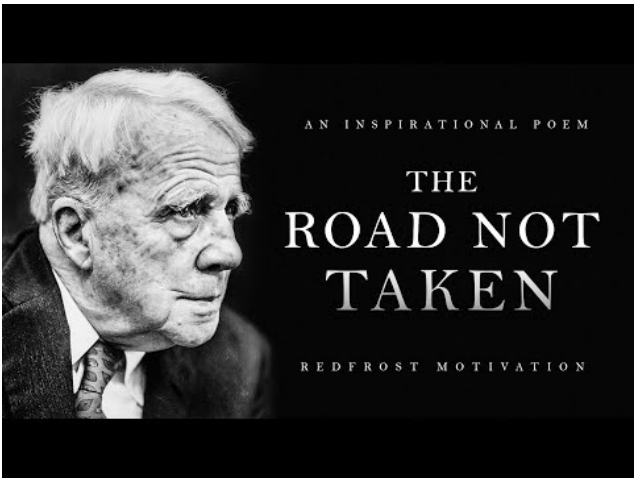
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Poem in the Public Domain.



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FIRE AND ICE

Some say the world will end in fire,
Some say in ice.
From what I've tasted of desire
I hold with those who favor fire.
But if it had to perish twice,
I think I know enough of hate

To know that for destruction ice
Is also great,
And would suffice.

Poem in the Public Domain.

Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening

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Nothing Gold Can Stay

Joy Harjo (1951-)

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Joy Harjo (born in Tulsa, Oklahoma) is a critically acclaimed poet and musician, drawing on American Indian history and storytelling tradition. She is a member of the Mvskoke (aka. Muscogee, or Creek) nation; her father was a member of the Mvskoke tribe, and her mother was Cherokee, French, and Irish. In her work, she incorporates the history, myths, and beliefs of Native America (Creek in particular) as well as ideas that concern feminism, imperialism and colonization, contemporary America, and the contemporary world. Related to Native American storytelling is a sense of all things being connected, which often shapes her work. Inspired by the evolving nature of oral storytelling and ceremonial tradition, she integrates various forms of music,

performance, and dance into her poetry, and has released award-winning CDs of original music. Her first volume of poetry was The Last Song (1975), and her other books of poetry include How We Became Human—New and Selected Poems (2004), The Woman Who Fell From the Sky (1994), and She Had Some Horses (1983). Her CD releases include Red Dreams, A Trail Beyond Tears (2010) and Winding Through the Milky Way (2008).

Perhaps the World Ends Here

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text. You can view it online here: https://oer.pressbooks.pub/theworryfreewriter/?p=100

Langston Hughes (1902-1967)

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A leading figure of the Harlem Renaissance in the United States, Langston Hughes developed an international reputation for his poetry. Hughes spent his childhood in the Midwest; he was born in Joplin, Missouri, but he also lived in Lincoln, Illinois and Cleveland, Ohio. As a young man, he began a college education at Columbia University, but withdrew to travel as a merchant seaman. He eventually completed his education at Lincoln University.

Hughes is particularly known for his perceptive portrayals of black life in America from the twenties through the sixties. He wrote prolifically and in a variety of genres–poems, plays, short stories, and novels. A significant feature of his work is the influence of jazz on his poetry, particularly in Montage of a Dream Deferred (Holt, 1951). Hughes also mentored other young poets and writers like Ralph Ellison. In 1926, he articulated the purpose of young black writers and poets in "The

Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain": "The younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter. We know we are beautiful . . . If colored people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, their displeasure doesn't matter either. We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on top of the mountain free within ourselves."

Donald B. Gibson noted in the introduction to *Modern Black Poets: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Prentice Hall, 1973) that Hughes "differed from most of his predecessors among black poets ... in that he addressed his poetry to the people, specifically to black people." Hughes considered himself to be, indeed, a "people's poet" who elevated the black aesthetic while confronting racism and stereotypes in his work.

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.

Poem in the Public Domain.

"Mother to Son "

Listen to Hughes reciting "Mother to Son":

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Marge Piercy (1936-)

Marge Piercy was born in Detroit, Michigan, to Bert (Bunnin) Piercy and Robert Piercy. While her father was presbyterian, she was raised Jewish by her mother and maternal grandmother who gave Piercy the Hebrew name of Marah.

On her childhood and Jewish identity, Piercy said: "Jews and blacks were always lumped together when I grew up. I didn't grow up 'white.' Jews weren't white. My first boyfriend was black. I didn't find out I was white until we spent time in Baltimore and I went to a segregated high school. I can't express how weird it was. Then I just figured they didn't know I was Jewish."

Piercy was involved in the civil rights movement, New Left, and Students for a Democratic Society. She is a feminist, environmentalist, marxist, social, and anti-war activist. In 1977, Piercy became an associate of the Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press (WIFP), an American nonprofit publishing organization that works to increase communication between women and connect the public with forms of women-based media.

Piercy is the author of more than seventeen volumes of poems, among them *The Moon Is Always Female* (1980, considered a feminist classic) and *The Art of Blessing the Day* (1999). She has published fifteen novels, one play (*The Last White Class*, co-authored with her current (and third) husband Ira Wood), one

collection of essays (*Parti-colored Blocks for a Quilt*), one non-fiction book, and one memoir.

Piercy's poetry tends to be highly personal free verse and often centered on feminist and social issues. Her work shows commitment to social change—what she might call, in Judaic terms, tikkun olam, or the repair of the world). It is rooted in story, the wheel of the Jewish year, and a range of landscapes and settings.

"Connections"

"To Be of Use"

"Barbie Doll"

"What are Big Girls Made of"

Piercy reading "To Be of Use"

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Sylvia Plath (1932-1963)

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Sylvia Plath was an American poet, novelist, short story writer, and essayist. She is most famous for her semi-autobiographical novel, *The Bell Jar* and her advancements in confessional poetry building on the work of Robert Lowell and W.D. Snodgrass. Plath has been widely researched and followed since her controversial suicide. She has gained fame as one of the greatest poets of her generation. Widely read throughout the world, Sylvia Plath has risen to iconic status because of her emotional poetry dealing with loss and depression, and has thus touched many people struggling with the same feelings. In 1982, Plath became the first poet to win a Pulitzer Prize posthumously for *The Collected Poems*.

An interview with Sylvia Plath:

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Daddy

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Alberto Rios (1952-)

"Alberto Ríos, Arizona's inaugural poet laureate and a chancellor of the Academy of American Poets, is the author of eleven books and chapbooks of poetry, including *The Theater of Night*—winner of the 2007 PEN/Beyond Margins Award—three collections of short stories, and a memoir about growing up on the border, *Capirotada.* His book *The Smallest Muscle in the Human Body* was a finalist for the National Book Award. Ríos is the recipient of numerous accolades and his work is included in more than 300 national and international literary anthologies. He is also the host of the PBS program Books & Co. His work is regularly taught and translated, and has been adapted to dance and both classical and popular music. Ríos is a University Professor of Letters, Regents' Professor, and the Katharine C. Turner Chair in English at Arizona State University. In 2017, he was named director of the Virginia G. Piper Center for Creative Writing. His most recent book is *A Small Story About the Sky*."

Nani

A House Called Tomorrow

Don't Go Into the Library

Alberto Rios Reading "Nani":

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Rios reading "A House Called Tomorrow":

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Rios reading "Don't Go Into the Library":

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Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950)

Image in the Public Domain.

Edna St. Vincent Millay was a lyrical poet and playwright and the first woman to receive the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry. During her own time, Millay was almost as famous for her unusual, Bohemian lifestyle and opinions on social matters as she was for her actual poetry. During much of her career she lived the life of a minor celebrity. In time, however, critical estimation of her poetry has caught up with her celebrity, and in recent decades it has become increasingly clear just how important Millay is for the history of early twentieth-century American literature.

Millay lived and wrote during the early decades of the twentieth-century, a period in which the literary Modernism of T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound dominated American poetry. Millay, however, was a distinctly un-Modern poet whose works have much more in common with those of Robert Frost or Thomas Hardy; her poetry is always formal, masterfully written to the strictures of rhyme and meter. During her times a number of poets and critics argued fiercely over the form poetry should take in the rapidly changing times of the twentieth-century; Millay, for her part, was not particularly vocal in these debates, because her works speak for themselves.

Millay proved that the old forms could retain their validity in a changing world. Her sonnets are often considered to be the finest written in the twentieth-century, and her short, lyrical poems are

unrivaled for their elegance and musicality. Millay's influence extends to a number of poets of the latter twentieth-century, Elizabeth Bishop notably among them. Millay's poetry provides a glimpse at another form of poetry, full of sweetness and light, that remained stable and clear throughout the turmoil of Modernism.

Eight Sonnets

I

When you, that at this moment are to me
Dearer than words on paper, shall depart,
And be no more the warder of my heart,
Whereof again myself shall hold the key;
And be no more, what now you seem to be,
The sun, from which all excellencies start
In a round nimbus, nor a broken dart
Of moonlight, even, splintered on the sea;
I shall remember only of this hour—
And weep somewhat, as now you see me weep—
The pathos of your love, that, like a flower,
Fearful of death yet amorous of sleep,
Droops for a moment and beholds, dismayed,
The wind whereon its petals shall be laid.

II

What's this of death, from you who never will die?
Think you the wrist that fashioned you in clay,
The thumb that set the hollow just that way
In your full throat and lidded the long eye

So roundly from the forehead, will let lie
Broken, forgotten, under foot some day
Your unimpeachable body, and so slay
The work he most had been remembered by?
I tell you this: whatever of dust to dust
Goes down, whatever of ashes may return
To its essential self in its own season,
Loveliness such as yours will not be lost,
But, cast in bronze upon his very urn,
Make known him Master, and for what good reason.

III

I know I am but summer to your heart,
And not the full four seasons of the year;
And you must welcome from another part
Such noble moods as are not mine, my dear.
No gracious weight of golden fruits to sell
Have I, nor any wise and wintry thing;
And I have loved you all too long and well
To carry still the high sweet breast of spring.
Wherefore I say: O love, as summer goes,
I must be gone, steal forth with silent drums,
That you may hail anew the bird and rose
When I come back to you, as summer comes.
Else will you seek, at some not distant time,
Even your summer in another clime.

IV

Here is a wound that never will heal, I know,
Being wrought not of a dearness and a death
But of a love turned ashes and the breath
Gone out of beauty; never again will grow
The grass on that scarred acre, though I sow

Young seed there yearly and the sky bequeath
Its friendly weathers down, far underneath
Shall be such bitterness of an old woe.
That April should be shattered by a gust,
That August should be leveled by a rain,
I can endure, and that the lifted dust
Of man should settle to the earth again;
But that a dream can die, will be a thrust
Between my ribs forever of hot pain.

V

What lips my lips have kissed, and where, and why,
I have forgotten, and what arms have lain
Under my head till morning; but the rain
Is full of ghosts to-night, that tap and sigh
Upon the glass and listen for reply;
And in my heart there stirs a quiet pain,
For unremembered lads that not again
Will turn to me at midnight with a cry.
Thus in the winter stands the lonely tree,
Nor knows what birds have vanished one by one,
Yet knows its boughs more silent than before:
I cannot say what loves have come and gone;
I only know that summer sang in me
A little while, that in me sings no more.

VI

Euclid alone has looked on Beauty bare.
Let all who prate of Beauty hold their peace,
And lay them prone upon the earth and cease
To ponder on themselves, the while they stare
At nothing, intricately drawn nowhere
In shapes of shifting lineage; let geese

Gabble and hiss, but heroes seek release
From dusty bondage into luminous air.
O blinding hour, O holy, terrible day,
When first the shaft into his vision shone
Of light anatomized! Euclid alone
Has looked on Beauty bare. Fortunate they
Who, though once only and then but far away,
Have heard her massive sandal set on stone.

VII

Oh, oh, you will be sorry for that word!
Give back my book and take my kiss instead.
Was it my enemy or my friend I heard?—
"What a big book for such a little head!"
Come, I will show you now my newest hat,
And you may watch me purse my mouth and prink.
Oh, I shall love you still and all of that.
I never again shall tell you what I think.
I shall be sweet and crafty, soft and sly;
You will not catch me reading any more;
I shall be called a wife to pattern by;
And some day when you knock and push the door,
Some sane day, not too bright and not too stormy,
I shall be gone, and you may whistle for me.

VIII

Say what you will, and scratch my heart to find
The roots of last year's roses in my breast;
I am as surely riper in my mind
As if the fruit stood in the stalls confessed.
Laugh at the unshed leaf, say what you will,
Call me in all things what I was before,
A flutterer in the wind, a woman still;

I tell you I am what I was and more.
My branches weigh me down, frost cleans the air,
My sky is black with small birds bearing south;
Say what you will, confuse me with fine care,
Put by my word as but an April truth,—
Autumn is no less on me that a rose
Hugs the brown bough and sighs before it goes.

Poem in the Public Domain

Love is Not All

Ballad of the Harp-Weaver

Millay reads "Love is Not All":

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Millay reads "Ballad of the HarpWeaver"

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May Swenson (1913-1989)

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Anna Thilda May "May" Swenson was an American poet and playwright. Harold Bloom considered her one of the most important and original poets of the 20th century.

The first child of Margaret and Dan Arthur Swenson, she grew up as the eldest of 10 children in a Mormon household where Swedish was spoken regularly and English was a second language. Although her conservative family struggled to accept the fact that she was a lesbian, they remained close throughout her life. Much of her later poetry works were devoted to children (e.g. the collection *Iconographs*, 1970). She also translated the work of contemporary Swedish poets, including the selected poems of Nobel laureate Tomas Tranströmer.

"Pigeon Woman "

May Swenson reads her poem, "Still Turning":

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Dylan Thomas (1914-1953)

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Dylan Marlais Thomas was an Anglo-Welsh poet who is widely considered one of the most influential English-language poets of the twentieth-century. Although Thomas wrote during the heyday of Modernism, his poetry was radically different from anything produced by the Modernists. Writing deeply personal works fueled by his own troubled emotional life, Thomas produced verse in a highly idiosyncratic style, choosing words often for sound rather than sense and using innovative meters and rhyme schemes similar to those found in the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins, whom Thomas greatly admired. Along with Yeats, Thomas' sonorous and personal style of poetry tinged with his own knowledge of Welsh language and folklore helped to precipitate the Celtic Revival in British literature. Often considered to be one of the greatest poets of the twentieth century in terms of the sheer beauty of his language, Thomas' influence extends to the present among poets like Seamus Heaney, who attempts to capture the music of ancient poetry in the vocabulary of the present-day.

“Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night“

Listen to Thomas reciting his poem:

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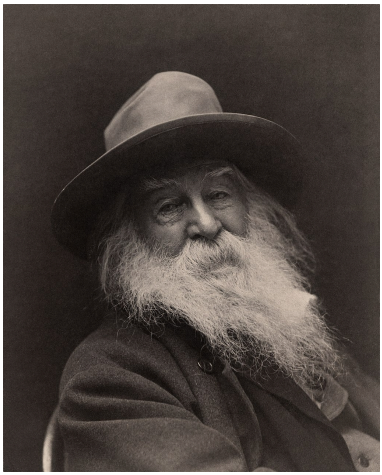
Walt Whitman (1819-1892)



Walt Whitman in the Public Domain.

Walt Whitman is considered to be one of the most influential and significant 19th century American authors. He was born on Long Island in 1819 and grew up in Brooklyn, New York, receiving a limited education. His family was poor and he had to stop going to school when he was eleven to help earn money for his large family of nine children of which he was the second oldest. Because of this, Walt was largely self taught. One of Whitman's first jobs was working as an apprentice for a Long Island newspaper called the Patriot. This is where he was introduced to the printing press and typesetting. From there, he worked various jobs such as a printer, school teacher, reporter, and editor across the country.

Eventually he settled into writing poetry and self-published his work *Leaves of Grass*, which was inspired by his travels across America and his admiration for Ralph Waldo Emerson and his writing. While there were countless poets before him, and possibly even more after, Whitman stands alone in his own category when it comes to establishing a place in American literature. His unique ideals and way of commanding the words of his poems has a certain rough elegance that is rare among poets, let alone other poets of his time. His fearlessness when it came to expressing certain more "taboo" themes (such as sex) gives his writing an unmistakable and unmatchable edge, pushing him through the decades to persevere as one of America's most talented and unique poets.

O Captain! My Captain!

O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,
The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won,
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring;
But O heart! heart! heart!
O the bleeding drops of red,
Where on the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;
Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills,
For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths—for you the shores a-crowding,
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;
Here Captain! dear father!
This arm beneath your head!
It is some dream that on the deck,
You've fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will,
The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed and done,
From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object

won;
Exult O shores, and ring O bells!
But I with mournful tread,
Walk the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

I Hear American Singing

I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear;
Those of mechanics – each one singing his, as it should be, blithe and strong;
The carpenter singing his, as he measures his plank or beam,
The mason singing his, as he makes ready for work, or leaves off work;
The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat – the deckhand singing on the steamboat deck;
The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench – the hatter singing as he stands;
The wood-cutter's song – the ploughboy's, on his way in the morning, or at the noon intermission, or at sundown;
The delicious singing of the mother – or of the young wife at work – or of the girl sewing or washing – Each singing what belongs to her, and to none else;
The day what belongs to the day – At night, the party of young fellows, robust, friendly,
Singing, with open mouths, their strong melodious songs.

A Noiseless Patient Spider

A noiseless, patient spider,
I mark'd, where, on a little promontory, it stood, isolated;
Mark'd how, to explore the vacant, vast surrounding,
It launch'd forth filament, filament, filament, out of itself;
Ever unreeling them–ever tirelessly speeding them.

And you, O my Soul, where you stand,
Surrounded, surrounded, in measureless oceans of space,
Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing,–seeking the spheres, to
connect them;
Till the bridge you will need, be form'd–till the ductile anchor
hold;
Till the gossamer thread you fling, catch somewhere, O my Soul.

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- *"Dylan Thomas" from New World Encyclopedia licensed under CC BY SA.*
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43. Writing About Poetry

In the "Intro to Poetry" chapter, we covered the first steps to writing about poetry–choosing a poem and reading it carefully to think about what the poem means to you and to come up with some ideas about what the author is trying to tell readers through the poem. In this chapter, we'll take the next steps to writing critically about poetry. As we discussed in the previous chapter, these are steps that you'll need to take when writing about any academic text, as well.

Step 3: Research the Poem

Remember that, while your response and connection to a particular poem is dependent upon your experience, part of better understanding poetry is learning more about the author and the context of the poem. The combination of your own understanding and the support of strong outside sources will make your argument more powerful.

Primary Sources

Primary Evidence is the *thing* we study. In academic writing, this kind of evidence differs according to discipline. In the field of English literature, primary evidence comes from the poem, novel, short story, play, or memoir you are studying. In this case, your primary source is the poem you have chosen. Always cite the poem in your Works Cited page, along with other outside sources!

A student, for example, might present direct quotes from the novel *The Sun Also Rises* supporting specific claims he forwards in

his argument, as well as **summarized** and **paraphrased** passages in which he describes, in his own words, key occurrences in the novel. Below, he *summarizes* a conversation between Jake and Robert Cohn, condensing a lengthy passage of dialogue into one sentence:

> In an early conversation between Jake and Robert Cohn, Jake warns his friend that Cohn desires to go to South America only because he has been reading sentimental literature.

Later, *paraphrasing* the novel's description of Jake's and his friends' response to a bullfight, the student might translate Hemingway's words into his own in about the same number of words as the original passage:

> Jake observes Brett for any signs of serious disturbance as she watches the matador kill the bull, but Brett is not upset by the scene. Instead she expresses her appreciation for the matador's extraordinary grace.

These examples from the primary text support the student's argument, but how does he decide when to quote, summarize, or paraphrase? These decisions are important ones for effectively incorporating primary evidence into an essay. Here are a few guidelines as you consider these options in your own writing:

1. Use the shortest quote possible to generate (a) the

evidence needed and (b) the effect you seek. Be careful to *avoid* long quotes unless they serve a significant purpose in forwarding your argument. *Do* use quotes to "liven up" your argument, to bring the voice of the literary text into your academic prose.

2. Use summary to provide a broad-scoped piece of evidence (a long passage from the novel, for example) to the reader. That "Jake and Brett have multiple tension-filled encounters" (Bill's summary) is evidence that they still care for each other even though they cannot overcome Jake's impotence to settle into a committed relationship. There may be no need in this section of Bill's essay to focus more closely on particular tension-filled exchanges.
3. Employ paraphrase when the content of a scene or passage is pertinent but does not require the original language itself. Bill's description of Jake's and Brett's behavior during the bullfight is a helpful example of effective paraphrase use.

Secondary Sources

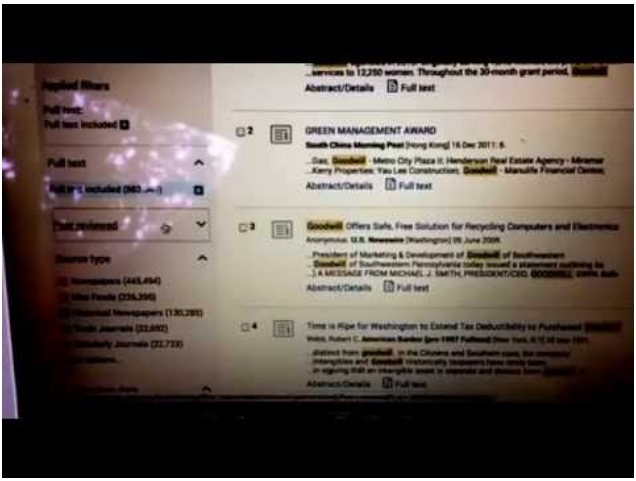
Although the proof that Jake's struggles reveal the destructive potential of war must come from the novel itself, the primary source, the student can use **secondary sources** to (a) help explain his perspective on the novel, and (b) indicate how his argument fits into the ongoing scholarly dialogue about the novel. Plenty of people have contributed to the conversation on the meaning of *The Sun Also Rises*. The student's goal is to say something *new*, to bring the reader fresh insight about the novel, to contribute

something *original* to the conversation. To clarify the significance of his argument, he can integrate material from carefully selected **scholarly articles**.

Start by creating a list of questions about the poem that you've chosen. After reading the poem and thinking about it a bit, what questions do you still have? What would you like to know about the author and his/her experiences? For example, if you've chosen "Mother to Son," by Langston Hughes, you might wonder if the poem is about his actual mother. For Steven Crane's, "War is Kind," you might wonder what his experience with war was.

While there are certainly times when citing a website or other online source might be appropriate, when writing a paper about literature for an English course, the sources you choose should be scholarly articles and/or books by people who are qualified to discuss literature. Remember, since writing about literature is a step toward learning to write about academic texts, it's important to also use academic sources in our discussions about literature. While you may have some luck finding good articles or even the full text of books with a google search, your best bet is to use the YC databases. In addition to knowing that you are finding academic sources, another benefit to using the databases is that there is a Cite button on every source that gives you the correct citation!

Here is a video with a brief review of how to use the databases at YC:



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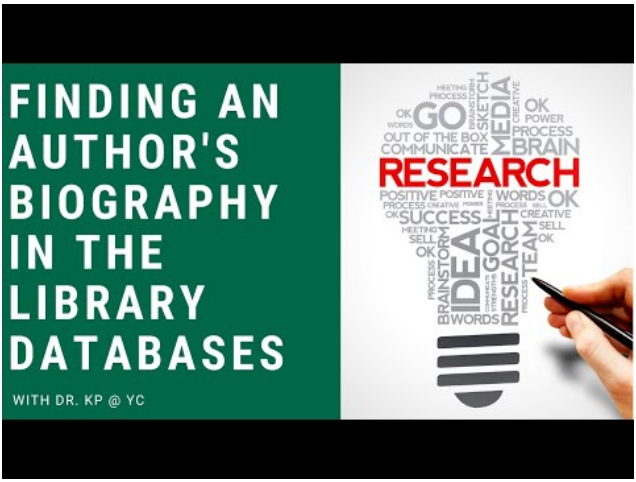
If you need more help, do contact the librarians at YC. They are extremely helpful!

About the Author

You might want to begin by seeking the author's biography. After performing our own analysis, it can be intriguing and sometimes helpful to consider the author's life. For instance, Hughes wrote during the Harlem Renaissance, the first large-scale African American artistic movement. Although he had read the poetry of many well-regarded British and American poets, he determined to raise the status of African American folk forms, challenging the idea that great art must follow the traditions of European forms. Adding

this biographical and historical component to our study increases our understanding of the importance of Hughes's contribution to the improvement of African American lives and his celebration of African Americans' part in shaping U.S. culture.

Author's biographies can often be found in the **ProQuest Literature Online** database. The video below shows how to find an author's biography in the database and showcases how this first source can be a springboard for the rest of your research.



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About the Poem

The author's biography might answer many of our research

questions. As we continue on in our research, we have several options:

- If you still have additional questions, your next step should be to attempt to try to find the answers to those questions.
- You might choose to try to find a source about the poem you've chosen to see what academic writers have said about it. For example, you might search for a source that discusses Dickinson's "I saw a dying eye" to see what scholars believe it means.
- You might choose to try to find a source that discusses the author's work as a whole. For example, you might find a source that discusses Langston Hughes' poetry.
- You might look for a source that focuses on the theme of the poem and uses the poem as an example. For example, you might look at the psychology of grief to better understand "Do Not Go Gentle into that Good Night."
- You might look for context of the poem. If the poem is about a historical event, like Browning's "Meeting at Night" and "Parting at Morning," you might want to find more information about their love story. Or you might want to look for information about the Civil War to better understand Crane's perspective on war in "War is Kind."

It's a really good idea to create a Research Journal to help you keep track of your sources and what you are learning from them. See "Keeping a Research Journal" if you need a reminder of how to create a research journal. Here is a sample research journal based on Shakespeare's "Sonnet 66":

Research Journal

De Grazia, Margreta, and Adena Rosmarin. "Interpreting Shakespeare's Sonnets." *PMLA*, vol. 100, no. 5, 1985, pp. 810–812. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/462100. Accessed 23 Mar. 2020.

Notes:

This is a letter to the editor and a response regarding how to interpret Shakespeare's sonnets.

Quotes:

"It is well known that Shakespeare's sonnets were a Romantic obsession because their generically "personal" rhetoric made them seem the key to Shakespeare's heart" (De Grazia, 811)

——

HOLTON, AMANDA. "AN OBSCURED TRADITION: THE SONNET AND ITS FOURTEEN-LINE PREDECESSORS." *The Review of English Studies*, vol. 62, no. 255, 2011, pp. 373–392. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/23016433. Accessed 23 Mar. 2020.

Notes: History of the sonnet

Quotes

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Henneman, John Bell. "The Man Shakespeare: His Growth as an Artist." *The Sewanee Review*, vol. 5, no. 1, 1897, pp. 95–126. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/27527919. Accessed 23 Mar. 2020.

Notes: Biography

Quotes:

———

Stockard, Emily E. "Patterns of Consolation in Shakespeare's Sonnets 1-126." *Shakespearean Criticism*, edited by Michelle Lee, vol. 42, Gale, 1999. *Gale Literature Criticism*, https://link-gale-com.proxy.yc.edu/apps/doc/DXUIHA790857588/LCO?u=yava&sid=LCO&xid=65e42aed. Accessed 23 Mar. 2020.

Notes:

Quotes:

——-

Frost, Adam. *Shakespeare*, *William*, 1564-1616. ProQuest, Ann Arbor, 2001. *ProQuest*, https://proxy.yc.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.proxy.yc.edu/docview/2137919713?accountid=8141.

Notes: Biography of Shakespeare

Quotes:

——

Bevington, David. "Sonnets." *The Necessary Shakespeare*. Pearson, 2009.

Notes: A summary of Shakespeare's sonnet authorship.

Quotes: "The wary consensus of most scholars is that the sonnets were written over a number of years…before 1598, but some perhaps later and even up to the date of publication in 1609" (Bevington).

"Love and friendship are a refuge for the poet faced

with hostile fortune and an indifferent world" (Bevington."

"…the bond between poet and friend is extraordinarily strong" (Bevington).

""The English form of three quatrains and a concluding couplet lends itself to a step-by-step development of idea and image, culminating in an epigrammatic two-line conclusion that may summarize the thought of the preceding twelve lines or give a sententious interpretation of the images developed up to this point" (Bevington).

"His emphasis on friendship seems new, for no other sequence addressed a majority of its sonnets to a friend rather than to a mistress…" (Bevington).

"…the exaltation of friendship over love was itself a widespread Neoplatonic commonplace recently popularized in the writings of John Lyly" (Bevington).

Here is a video in which Dr. Palmer shows a class how to conduct research and compile a research journal for Shakespeare's "Sonnet 66."

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MLA Citation Review

Please complete this lesson on MLA formatting:

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Citing Articles and Books

Here are the basic MLA formats for citing articles and books:

Article online:

Works Cited: Achenbach, Joel. "America's river." *Washington Post*, 5 May 2002, www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A13425-2202May1.html. Accessed 20 July 2003.

In text: (Achenbach, pp)

Article in a database:

Works Cited: Langhamer, Claire. "Love and Courtship in Mid-Twentieth-Century England." *Historical Journal*, vol. 50, no. 1, 2007, pp. 173-96. *ProQuest*, doi:10.1017/S0018246X06005966. Accessed 27 May 2009.

In text: (Langhamer, pp)

A book:

Works Cited: Gorman, Elizabeth. *Prairie Women*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986.

In text: (Gorman, pp)

A Poem from This Text:

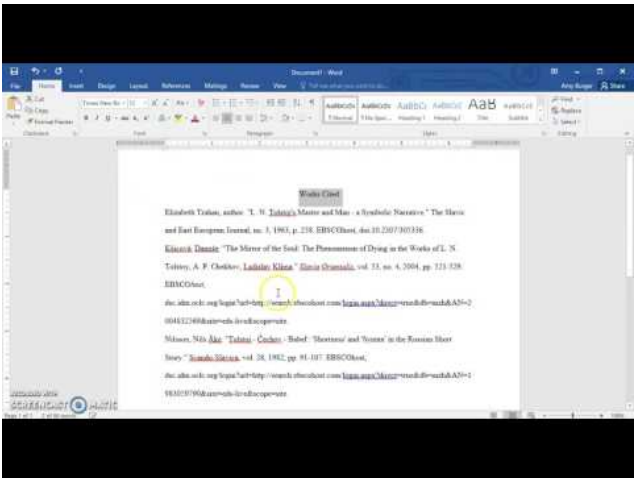
Works Cited: Frost, Robert. "The Road Not Taken." *The Worry Free Writer*, 2020. http://theworryfreewriter.pressbooks.com.

In text: (Frost)

Note that the in text citation (what is in parenthesis after a quote) is the first word/s in the Works Cited listing. Every source listed in your Works Cited should be cited at least once in the text of the paper.

Creating a Works Cited page

In an MLA paper, the sources are listed at the end of the paper on the Works Cited page. Please follow the guidelines discussed in the video below when creating your Works Cited page. Remember, you can simply click the cite button for each source you find in the Library Databases for the correct MLA citation.



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Step 4: Create a Thesis and Outline

Once you have completed your research, your first step is to think about what you want to say about the poem. Hopefully, you are clear at this point about what the poem means to you and what you think the author is trying to say. Now your job is to think of something to say about the poem that is uniquely yours. Topics might include the following:

1. What the theme of the poem is.
2. How the author uses Elements of Poetry to create the theme of the poem.

3. How understanding the author or the cultural context of the poem deepens the meaning.

Generally, your research will guide your decision about what to write about. Think about what you think is the most important thing for readers to understand about the poem.

If you are still completely stumped about what to write about, you might choose the option #2 above because it is pretty straightforward. Since you've already done quite a bit of reflecting on the poem, in addition to all of your research, you should have a clear idea of what the theme is and what elements of poetry are used in the poem. Your thesis, then, is a combination of the two. ie "The author shows readers that _____ by using _____, _____, and _____."

Your paper should have a minimum of three points, but it can have more. Let's say that a student has chosen Shakespeare's "Sonnet 66" as their poem. Here is their thesis:

> In this sonnet, Shakespeare uses an emotional plea, irony, asyndeton, antithesis, and parallel structures to show that, no matter how difficult life seems, the love of one person is enough to make life worth living.

Note that the thesis combines the theme of the poem, as well as the elements of poetry that help to create the theme–emotional plea, irony, asyndeton, antithesis, and parallel structures. Each of these five points would be discussed in its own paragraph in the body of the paper, so each of the points would be one point on the outline. In addition, the student should include some quotes from the poem for each point.

The outline might look something like this:

1. Introduction

a)Hook: It is human nature to sometimes feel as if the world is just too much to bear. We experience tragedy and see injustice and might sometimes feel as if there is no hope left. Often just knowing that we are not alone is enough to push us to persevere another day.

1. b) intro to the topic: While we might think this is a modern experience, William Shakespeare's "Sonnet 66" proves that there really is nothing new under the sun.
2. c) thesis: In this sonnet, Shakespeare uses an emotional plea, irony, asyndeton, antithesis, and parallel structures to show that, no matter how difficult life seems, the love of one person is enough to make life worth living.
3. Author, special circumstances, summary of the poem
4. Emotional Plea
    - "Tired with all these, for restful death I cry" (Shakespeare, 1).

4. irony

- "As, to behold a beggar born" (2)
- "And needy, nothing trimmed in jollity" (3)

5. Asyndeton

- Begins each line with "and"

6. Antithesis

- “purest faith” “unhappily foresworn” (4)
- “gilded honor” “shamefully misplaced” (5)
- “Maiden virtue” “rudely strumpeted” (6)
- “right perfection” “wrongfully displaced”

7. parallel structures

- “Strength disabled” (8)
- “art tongue-tied by authority” (9)
- “skill controlled by folly” (10)
- “truth misplaced” (11)
- “good held captive by ill” (12)

8. Conclusion

Here’s a video in which Dr. Palmer shows students how to create a thesis and outline of Shakespeare’s “Sonnet 66.”

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Step 5: Drafting Your Paper

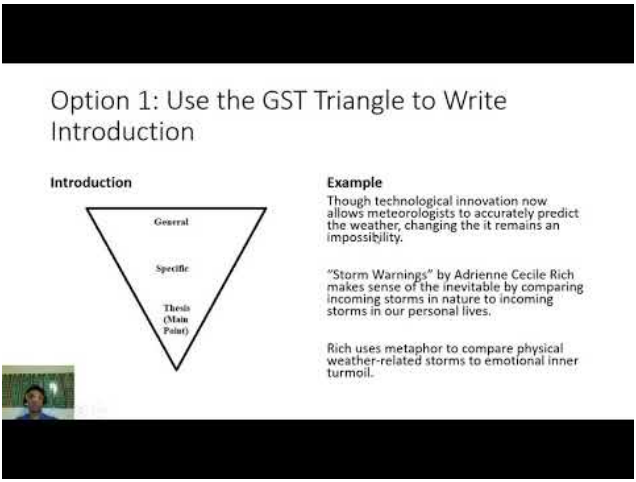
Once you have a clear idea of your thesis and the passages in the work that best support it, you can begin to shape and refine the essay.

Writing an Introduction

Make sure your introduction accurately reflects what you end up saying about the poem. You should start with a hook that connects

the theme of the poem to your readers' experiences. Avoid generalizations, but make sure to have some kind of attention grabber that will draw readers into the paper. Next, introduce the topic–in this case, you will want to include the author's full name and the title of the poem. Finally, complete your introduction with your thesis.

Here is a video explaining how these three components create the foundation for a strong introduction and conclusion:



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Writing the Argument

Make sure your body supports your thesis with good topic sentences and concrete examples…Remember that the best way to

support a thesis is to cite and analyze carefully selected passages from the text that relate directly to it. You want to have at LEAST one quote from the poem or your sources in each body paragraph to support your thoughts.

Three parts of a paragraph

1. **Topic sentence/Claim**
2. Support/Quote
3. *Analysis—underscore relevance to thesis*

Here's an example body paragraph from a student paper on Lawrence's poem, "Snake." Note that the parts of the paragraph are formatted to match the three parts listed above.

> **By using personification throughout the poem, Lawrence depicts a gentle snake that is more like a person than a creature.** Lawrence begins the poem by telling how a snake came to drink at his water-trough. Instead of describing the snake as an animal or using "it" to talk about the snake, Lawrence says that he "…must wait…for there he was at the trough before me" (6). Lawrence continues to show a softer side of the snake when he says "[the snake] rested his throat upon the stone bottom… / He sipped with his straight mouth, / Softly drank… / Silently" (9-13). Instead of a thrashing, dangerous creature, here is a quietly drinking person. Lawrence continues this image in the very next line. "Someone was before me at my water-trough, / And I, like a second comer, waiting" (14-15). *Throughout*

these lines, the snake becomes less of an animal and more of a person coming to drink.

Note how the last sentence tells the reader what the examples show. Also note that the in text citation shows the LINE of the poem only.

The Quote Formula

The Quote Formula is a formula for using quotes correctly in your writing. Always remember to surround quotes with your own words. You do this by introducing the quote and explaining the quote.

1. **Introduce the quote**. Here, you tell readers what the author is doing.

2. Give the quote. Here, you give an actual quote from the poem. Make sure to use quotation marks. The number after the quote is the line of the poem in which the quote is found.

3. *Explain the quote*. Tell readers what the quote means.

To illustrate, take a look at the next paragraph in the paper quoted above (formatted to match the three parts of the quote formula).

> Lawrence continues showing the gentler side of the snake by using similes. **The first example of this occurs when he describes the snake drinking:** "He lifted his head from his drinking, as cattle do, / And looked at me vaguely, as drinking cattle do" (16-17). *By comparing the snake to harmless, everyday farm animals, Lawrence is saying that he sees this snake as a harmless*

animal. **He continues showing the gentle side of the snake when he says,** "He drank enough / And lifted his head, dreamily, as one who has drunken" (41-42). *An evil animal would not look "dreamily" and satisfied like a person whose thirst has been quenched.* **He also shows the snake to be more of a person when he says,** "How glad I was he had come like a guest in quiet, to drink at my water-trough / And depart peaceful, pacified, and thankless" (28-30). *By using the word "guest", Lawrence shows that he does not think the snake is invading his yard but is welcome to come and help himself.* **Then Lawrence sees an even greater side of the snake when he says,** "[a]nd [the snake] looked around like a god, unseeing, into the air" (45). *Quite opposite of the snake representing the evil devil, Lawrence compares the snake to a god. And, like most gods described in mythology, the snake is arrogant.* **When Lawrence says the snake** "looked around…unseeing" (45), *it seems as if everything around the snake is beneath him, not worthy of his notice.* The author's use of similes effectively shows reader a gentler side of the snake, helping them to understand why he hesitates to kill it.

Some Tips

1. Use Present Tense
2. Include quotes from the poem (minimum of one per body paragraph)
3. Include quotes from outside sources (minimum of one per body paragraph)

4. Use MLA citation

Here's a video in which Dr. Palmer shows how to write a draft of a paper from an outline:

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Remember, your paper should be based on your own thoughts and observations about the poem. Your outside research should be used to support and strengthen your own thoughts!

Here's a draft of the Shakespeare paper we've been discussing:

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version of the text. You can view it online here: https://oer.pressbooks.pub/theworryfreewriter/?p=102#h5p-1

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PART VII

WRITING ABOUT SHORT FICTION

44. Introduction to Short Fiction

DR. KAREN PALMER

A short story is a work of short, narrative prose that is usually centered around one single event. It is limited in scope and has an introduction, body, and conclusion. Although a short story has much in common with a novel, it is written with much greater precision.

In this unit, you will work toward writing an analysis of a short story using a critical lens. The first step in your journey is to choose a short story from the Short Fiction Anthology. Then, you'll want to read the story carefully.

How to Read and Analyze Short Fiction

It is impossible to be a good writer without being a good reader first. But what do we mean by 'good'? Writers go to books for various reasons, whether for guidance and inspiration, or to understand something better about writing, life, or both. Perhaps the key to 'reading as a writer' – in other words, reading with a writerly eye – is being able to understand a text as its constituent parts while still appreciating it as a whole.

Reading the work of a variety of different authors is invaluable for expanding your awareness of what a text can be and do. Reading provides not only inspiration and useful examples of methods, subjects and styles, but also a context within which to develop your own voice and individuality as a writer. The more you learn about how texts operate, the better equipped you'll be as a writer.

Reading as a writer, also known as 'critical reading' or 'close reading', involves analyzing how a piece works and how an author achieves particular effects. When reading a short story, readers should consider how the writer uses elements like point of view, tone, and structure to generate tension or create a compelling ending.

Think about why the author made certain choices in their piece, and what the outcomes of those choices are. Remember: texts are not simply given. They are the result of countless decisions on the writer's part. Some of them might be instinctual and might not seem like conscious decision-making to the writer, but a great deal of them will also be the result of painstaking deliberation. We might not be able to know an author's personal intention, but we can analyze what effect their choices have on us.

Tips for Reading

1. As in poetry, read the short story for enjoyment first. Make sure you understand what is happening in the story. If you have questions about the basic story line, you can read the story again, find a *YouTube* video of someone reading the story out loud, watch a movie of the story, or use an online source like *SparkNotes* to give you a summary and basic background about the story.
2. Next, read the story with a pen in hand, annotating as you read. Underline lines you find important, take notes. Circle words you don't know and look up definitions. In this step, you are trying to uncover more meaning.
3. Finally, think about the theme of the story. What lesson does the main character learn? What can we learn about life from reading the story?

After reading a work carefully, annotating it, and reacting to it, the

next step is to determine how it fits into your perspective on the world. Forming your own conclusions about a literary work, or a topic of any kind, is the first step to shaping an argument and, ultimately, making a case for your perspective through a persuasive essay.

Step 2: Writing a Personal Response

As you move through this section of the text, you will be working toward writing a critical analysis of a short story of your choice. Choose a short story from the Short Fiction Anthology and complete the reading steps 1-3. Write a short, 1-2 page personal response to the story. You may use the form below to get you started. You will have the option to download your responses.

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https://oer.pressbooks.pub/theworryfreewriter/?p=114#h5p-6

Elements of Fiction

Once you feel you understand the basic story, it's time to think about the elements of fiction. Just as understanding the elements of poetry helps readers better appreciate the artistry of the poet, understanding the elements of fiction helps readers better appreciate and understand the authors of short fiction and their work. Remember that, while the elements are important, they are

used by an author to support the theme or main idea of the text–to highlight certain things they want the reader to understand about the characters and the theme.

Theme

One thing you should remember about theme is that it must be expressed in a complete sentence. For instance, "discrimination" is not a theme; however, "genetic modification in humans is dangerous because it can result in discrimination" is a complete theme.

A story can have more than one theme, and it is often useful to question and analyze how the themes interact. For instance, does the story have conflicting themes? Or do a number of slightly different themes point the reader toward one conclusion? Sometimes the themes don't have to connect– many stories use multiple themes in order to bring multiple ideas to the readers' attention.

So how do we find theme in a work? One way is to examine motifs, or recurring elements in a story. If something appears a number of times within a story, it is likely of significance. A motif can be a statement, a place, an object, or even a sound. Motifs often lead us to discern a theme by drawing attention to it through repetition. In addition, motifs are often symbolic. They can represent any number of things, from a character's childhood to the loss of a loved one. By examining what a motif symbolizes, you can extrapolate a story's possible themes. For instance, a story might use a park to represent a character's childhood. If the author makes constant references to the park, but we later see it replaced by a housing complex, we might draw conclusions about what the story is saying about childhood and the transition to adulthood.

Though theme is similar to message or argument, it is not necessarily an assertion like the other two terms are. In connecting to a work's meaning, a theme can refer to key topics of a work. Thus,

while we might say “Ode on a Grecian Urn” argues that the state of desire should be appreciated beyond the moment of satisfaction, we might state that the themes of the poem are becoming versus being, the role of timeless art in a time-dependent world, and the relationship between beauty and truth.The theme of a story is the universal lesson about life that readers can draw from the story. Theme might incorporate broad ideas, such as life/death, madness/sanity, love/hate, society/individual, known/unknown. Theme might also be focused more on the individual, for example the theme could be midlife crisis or growing up.

This video focuses on theme from a film perspective, but it is an interesting discussion that is also applicable to the short story. How To Find A Theme

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Characterization:

The characters are the people in a story. The narrator is the voice telling the story, but the narrator may or may not be a character in the story. The *protagonist* is the central character. The *antagonist* is the force or character that opposes the main character. Characters might be *static* (remain the same) or *dynamic* (change through the course of the story). The way an author creates a character is called characterization. Characterization includes the physical traits of characters, their personalities, and the way they speak. Authors might make judgments, either explicit (stated plainly) or implicit (allowing the reader to judge), about the characters in a story.

In addition to the protagonist and antagonist, most stories have secondary or minor characters. These are the other characters in the story. They sometimes support the protagonist or antagonist in their struggles, and they sometimes never come into contact with the main characters. Authors use minor characters for a variety of reasons. For instance, they can illustrate a different side of the main conflict, or they can highlight the traits of the main characters. One important type of minor character is called a *foil.* This character emphasizes the traits of a main character (usually the protagonist) through contrast. Thus, a foil will often be the polar opposite of the main character he or she highlights. Sometimes, the foil can take the form of a sidekick or friend. Other times, he or she might be someone who contends against the protagonist. For example, an author might use a decisive and determined foil to draw attention to a protagonist's lack of resolve and motivation.

Finally, any character in a story can be an *archetype***.** We can define archetype as an original model for a type of character, but that doesn't fully explain the term. One way to think of an archetype is to think of how a bronze statue is made. First, the sculptor creates his design out of wax or clay. Next, he creates a fireproof mold around the original. After this is done, the sculptor can make as many of the same sculpture as he pleases. The original model is

the equivalent to the archetype. Some popular archetypes are the trickster figure, such as Coyote in Native American myth or Brer Rabbit in African American folklore, and the femme fatale, like Pandora in Greek myth. Keep in mind that archetype simply means original pattern and does not always apply to characters. It can come in the form of an object, a narrative, etc. For instance, the apple in the Garden of Eden provides the object-based forbidden fruit archetype, and Odysseus's voyage gives us the narrative-based journey home archetype.

Here are some questions to consider about characterization:

- Who is the main character?
- Are the main character and other characters described through dialogue – by the way they speak (dialect or slang for instance)?
- Has the author described the characters by physical appearance, thoughts and feelings, and interaction (the way they act towards others)?
- Are they static/flat characters who do not change?
- Are they dynamic/round characters who DO change?
- What type of characters are they? What qualities stand out? Are they stereotypes?
- Are the characters believable?

Here's a video on Archetype and Characterization from Shmoop:

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Plot & Structure

Before you can write an in-depth explanation of the themes, motives, or diction of a book, you need to be able to discuss one of its most basic elements: the story. If you can't identify what has happened in a story, your writing will lack context. Writing your paper will be like trying to put together a complex puzzle without looking at the picture you're supposed to create. Each piece is important, but without the bigger picture for reference, you and anyone watching will have a hard time understanding what is being

assembled. Thus, you should look for "the bigger picture" in a book, poem, or play by reading for plot.

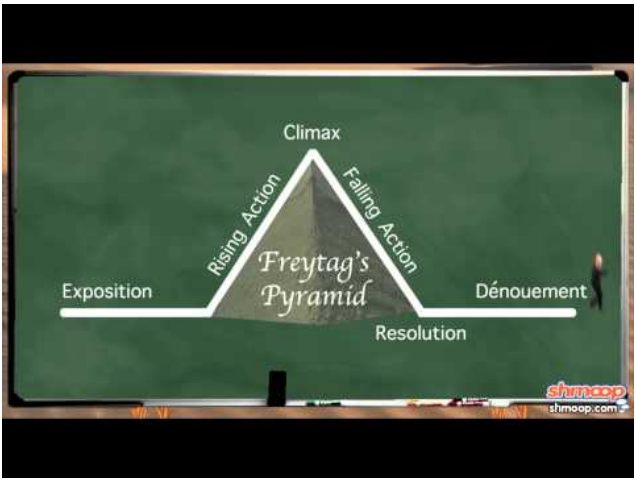
Rather than tell everything that might possibly happen to a character in certain circumstances, the writer carefully selects the details that will develop the plot, the characters, and the story's themes and messages. The writer engages in character development in order to develop the plot and the meaning of the story, paying special attention to the protagonist, or main character. In a conventional story, the protagonist grows and/or changes as a result of having to negotiate the story's central conflict. A character might be developed through exposition, in which the narrator simply tells us about this person. But more often, the character is developed through dialogue, point of view, and description of this person's expressions and actions.

In essence, the plot is the action of the story. Most short fiction follows the traditional pattern of Greek drama, with an introduction, rising action involving a conflict, the climax in which a crisis occurs (the turning point), and a resolution (how the conflict is resolved).

Here are some questions to consider about plot:

- What is the most important event?
- How is the plot structured? Is it linear, chronological or does it move around?
- Is the plot believable?

Here's another great video from Shmoop describing plot: Power in Literature, Short Stories Part 4: Plot



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The structure is the design or form of the story. The structure can provide clues to character and action and can mirror the author's intentions. Look for repeated elements in action, gestures, dialogue, description, and shifts.

Here's one way to look at this: Kurt Vonnegut on the Shapes of Stories

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Setting

If a story has characters and a plot, these elements must exist within some context. The frame of reference in which the story occurs is known as setting. The most basic definition of setting is one of place and time.

Setting doesn't have to just include the physical elements of time and place. Setting can also refer to a story's social and cultural context. There are two questions to consider when dealing with this kind of setting: "What is the cultural and social setting of the story?" and "What was the author's cultural and social setting when the story was written?" The first question will help you analyze why characters make certain choices and act in certain manners. The

second question will allow you to analyze why the author chose to have the characters act in this way.

Setting is created with elements such as geography, weather, time of day, social conditions, etc. Think about what role setting plays in the story. Is it an important part of the plot or theme? Or is it just a backdrop against which the action takes place?

The time period of the story is also a part of setting. Think about the following questions:

- When was the story written?
- Does it take place in the present, the past, or the future?
- How does the time period affect the language, atmosphere or social circumstances of the short story?

One more video from Shmoop on Setting: Power in Literature, Short Stories Part 2: Setting

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text. You can view it online here: https://oer.pressbooks.pub/theworryfreewriter/?p=114

Point of View:

By point of view we mean from whose eyes the story is being told. Short stories tend to be told through one character's point of view. Sometimes a short story is told by a narrator who might be a character in the story, or a person completely outside of the events of the story. A text can be written from first person (I/me), second person (you), or third person (he/she/it) point of view.

Here are some questions to consider about point of view:

- Who is the narrator or speaker in the story?
- Does the author speak through the main character?
- Is the story written in the first person "I" point of view?
- Is the story written in a detached third person "he/she" point of view?
- Is there an "all-knowing" 3rd person who can reveal what all the characters are thinking and doing at all times and in all places?

Here is a video about Points of View in Literature:

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Language & Style

Language and style are how the author presents the story to the reader. These elements are used to create the mood and tone of the story. In particular, look for diction, symbols, and irony.

- Diction: As in poetry, fiction often utilizes diction and figurative language to convey important ideas. In the short story, "The Story of an Hour," the words "aquiver," "spring," "delicious breath," and "twittering" suggest a kind of rebirth occurring for Mrs. Mallard.
- Symbolism: As in poetry, authors of short stories often use symbols to add depth to the story. A symbol represents

something larger than itself. Common examples of symbols include a country's flag, which represent the country, and a hear, which represents love. Each symbol has suggestive meanings–the flag, for example, brings up thoughts of patriotism, a unified country. What is the value of using symbols in a literary text? Symbols in literature allow a writer to express more in a condensed manner. The meaning of a symbol is connotative or suggestive, rather than definitive, which allows for multiple interpretations.

- Irony: Irony is the contrast between appearance/ expectation and reality. Irony can be verbal (spoken), situational (something is supposed to happen but doesn't), or dramatic (difference between what the characters know and what the audience knows).

This song includes many examples of irony…Alanis Morissette Updates 'Ironic' Lyrics

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Step 3: Elements of Fiction

Choose a short story from the Short Fiction Anthology. Follow the steps for reading fiction. Once you feel confident that you understand the meaning of the story and have written your personal response, it's time to look at how the elements of fiction help the author to convey the theme/meaning of the story. Fill out the following form to help you think through the elements of fiction in the story you chose. You will be able to save and export the document when you are done.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: `https://oer.pressbooks.pub/theworryfreewriter/?p=114#h5p-5`

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45. Understanding Critical Theory

DR. KAREN PALMER

The next step in your writing journey is to choose a critical lens through which to view your story.

Literary studies have been around long enough that like-minded readers and scholars have gravitated toward basic common positions as they engage in dialogue with each other. As a result, there are a number of widely-recognized critical approaches to literature, from formalists (who focus on how an author employs strategies and devices for a particular effect) to psychoanalytical critics (who explore texts to better understand humans' psychological structure and their typical responses to particular experiences). As you consider a poem or story, you might choose one of these approaches, called critical theories, as the general lens through which to examine that work.

Imagine putting on a pair of 3D glasses in a movie theater—suddenly things start popping out at you. Though the film hasn't changed, the way you see it has. Think of applying a critical theory to a text as putting on a pair of 3D glasses that help certain themes to pop out at you and amplify the meaning of the story.

Though there are many different critical/literary theories, we will look at just five: Formalism, Marxist, Feminist, Psychological, and New Historical.

Formalist

Also known as New Criticism, aesthetic or textual criticism, this

theory first emerged in the 1920s at Vanderbilt University as a response to the emphasis placed on biographical and historical context when analyzing literature at that time. It was largely influenced by TS Eliot, who emphasized the high place of art as art, the emotion expressed in art, and the form, close reading, and appreciation of order within a text.

This approach considers a literary work as an entity separate from its author and its historical context. The formalist explores a work as a mechanic would explore an engine. The mechanic would assume that the engine's parts and function can be studied without any understanding of the maker's life and/or the history of the period in which the engine exists. Similarly, to assess a poem's impact and understand its meaning, a scholar might "take it apart," considering its separate elements—the form, line length, rhythm, rhyme scheme, figurative language, and diction—and how those pieces make up the effect of and shape the meaning of the whole. The purpose of this type of criticism is to investigate every detail for connection to the whole–how do all the parts affect each other and fit together?

A formalist criticism will focus on *form*, *diction*, and *unity* in the work of literature.

Form grows out of the work's recurrences, repetitions, relationships, and motifs. According to formalism, what a work means depends on how it is said. Look at how events of plot are recounted, the effect of the story's point of view, foreshadowing, and progressions in nature that suggest meaning.

Diction looks closely at the word choices the author makes. Pay attention to denotation vs connotation. Denotation is simply what a word means, while connotation conveys a certain feeling about the word. For example, thin and skinny are both words that imply a slim figure. However, skinny often has a negative connotation. Another thing to look for is the etymology or history of a word. Pay attention to allusions to other words and symbols. Sometimes, a character's diction will tell readers something important about the person.

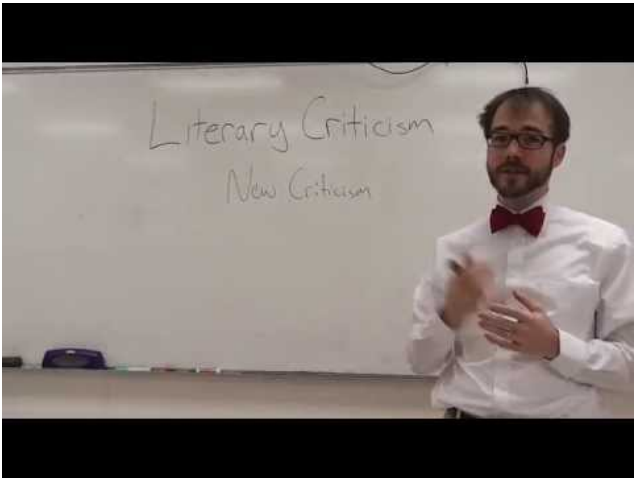
Unity refers to how all the aspects of a work fit together in

significant ways that create a whole. Pay attention to imagery, irony, and paradox.

The point is to look at how the various elements of the text work together to create a theme.

A sample thesis:

In "Everyday Use," the author unveils how family dynamics can influence decisions through form, diction, and unity.



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Marxist

Karl Marx was a 19th century German philosopher who believed that inequitable economic relationships were the source of class conflict. Marxism was meant to be a set of social, economic, and political ideas that would change the world.

The main principle of Marxist criticism is that, to explain any context, you have to look at both material (economic) and historical situations. It is based on the idea that the bourgeoisie and the proletariat are involved in a constant class struggle. The main goal is to explain a text by looking at the ways economics influences the characters.

It is important to note that Marxist criticism is not a promotion of socialist government, but rather a close study of how invisible economic forces underpin, and often undermine, authentic human relationships.

Some things to think about:

- Commodification–Explains how things are valued for power to impress or resale value rather than for their usefulness.
- Materialism vs spirituality: The belief that the material world is reality and that, if you look at the relationship among socio-economic classes, you will find insight into society.
- Class conflict: The idea that the bourgeoisie controls the proletariat by determining what is of value in society.
- Art, literature, and ideas point out injustice of society.

A sample thesis:

By looking at the short story, "A&P" by John Updike, through a Marxist lens, the coming-of-age story of a young man working at a supermarket north of Boston transforms into a tale about repression, class conflict, and consumerism in a capitalistic society.

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Feminist

Feminism is based on the assumption that culture is fundamentally patriarchal and that there is an imbalance of power that

marginalizes women and their work. Feminist theory began to be applied to literature in the 60s. The goal is to find misogyny (negative attitudes about women) in the text. There are many kinds of feminism, but there are similarities among them. Feminists look for ways to define the female experience, expose patriarchy, and save women from being the "other." Using this approach, one examines a literary work for insight into why and how women are subjected to oppression and, sometimes, how they subvert the forces that oppress them.

Expanding on feminist criticism, gender studies explore literature for increased understanding of socially defined gender identity and behavior and its impact on the individual and on society. It includes study of sexual orientation and how non-heterosexual identities are treated by mainstream ideology, a dynamic sometimes reflected in, sometimes critiqued by, literary works.

Things to think about:

1) Studies of difference–assume gender determines everything. How are men and women depicted differently?

2) Power: views of labor and economics, ie who holds the power in the text?

3) What roles do women play?

A Sample Thesis:

"The Day it Happened" reveals a new perspective by showing women as being powerful and men being quite pathetic in unmistakable and also subtle ways.

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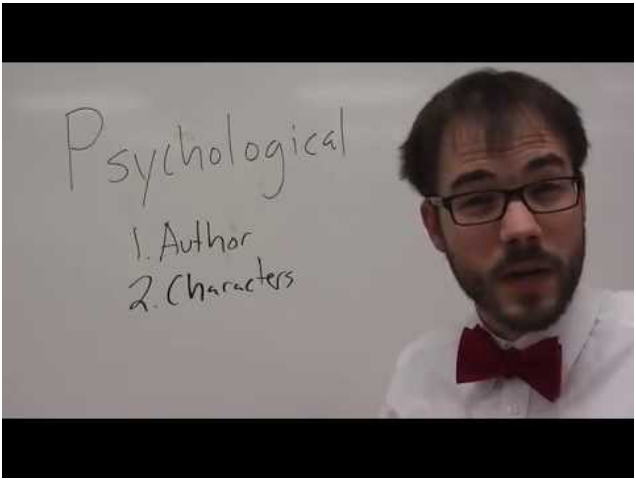
Psychological

Psychological criticism attempts to explain growth, development, and the structure of human personality. Based on the theories of Freud and others, this approach examines a text for signs and symbols of the subconscious processes, both of the characters and of humans in general. Revelatory symbols in a work might include water (the womb or the subconscious), a phallus (patriarchal power or sexual desire), a vessel such as a vase or pitcher (the vagina or sexual desire), and dark passageways (the feared subconscious where we store our unacceptable impulses and desires, and in

which we are afraid we might get lost from the ordered, visible world).



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There are two basic types of psychological criticism based on the work of Freud and Jung.

Freudian

The focus of this type of criticism is the idea that the unconscious plays a major role in what we do, feel, and say. Based on Freud's Tripartite Psyche, characters are analyzed based on their subconscious, namely the id, ego, and superego, in an attempt to discover why they make the decisions they do.

- Id: psychic energy, hunger for pleasure. Lawless, asocial, amoral. No thought to consequences, morality, ethics, etc.
- Ego: Reality–changes desires by postponing action or diverting it into a socially acceptable form.
- Superego: Sense of guilt/conscience.

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Jungian or Archetypal

This approach focuses on common figures and story-lines that reveal patterns in human behavior and psychology. Carl Jung and Joseph Campbell, key figures in the development of this approach, found that in the many stories they collected from cultures all over the world, these figures and story lines emerged over and over

again. Their conclusion was that these figures and story lines are etched into the human psyche (or subconscious), and as we recreate them in our stories, our audiences recognize them as symbolic of their own experience. Jung believed that we all have a personal consciousness, a personal unconsciousness, and a collective unconsciousness , which enables us to identify with universal symbols he calls archetypes.

Common Archetypes

Well-known archetypal characters are the hero, the outcast, the scapegoat, the Earth mother, the temptress, the mother, the mentor, and the devil figure.

Some common archetypal story lines are the journey, the quest, the fall, initiation, and death and rebirth.

Common image archetypes include colors (red= passion, green=life, blue = holiness, light vs dark); Numbers (3=religion, 4=seasons, elements, 7=whole/complete); Water (creation, birth, flowing water=passage of time); gardens (paradise/innocence); Circles (wholeness/union); Sun (passage of time)

Sample Thesis Statement:

In "A Rose for Emily," William Faulkner uses archetypes, foreshadowing, timeline disruption, and unknowing to portray the danger of loneliness, and the lengths humans will go to feel a connection.

New Historical

The historical approach seeks to illuminate a text's original meaning by uncovering details of the text's historical context.

Modifying the historical approach, the new historicist assumes that material factors interact with each other. While this approach seeks to understand a text through its cultural context, it also attempts to discover through the literary work insight into intellectual history. For example, a new historicist might consider Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* as a product shaped not only by Douglass's experience as a U.S. slave, but also by Douglass's challenge of finding a publisher (most of whom were white), and by his primarily Christian readership. These factors, according to the new historicist, would interact to shape the text and its meanings.

New Historical critics are concerned with social and cultural forces that create or threaten a community. To them, culture is the beliefs, institutions, arts, and behaviors of a particular people in time. They believe that history is subjectively set down–it's colored by the cultural context of the recorder. There is no single true history/worldview. The main point is to look at how the text reveals and comments on the different voices of the culture it depicts.

Ideas to consider in a text:

1) What were the formative experiences, significant people, texts, religious influences, political stance, and social class in the author's life?

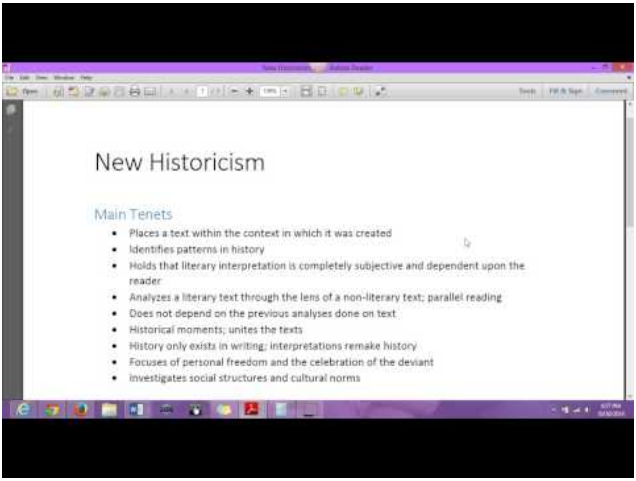
2) What were the major events, controversies, people of the time? Who represented the power bases? Who opposed power and influence?

3) What voices do you meet in the text? Which ones are

powerful? What are the social rules observed? Is the text critical/supportive of them? What does the text imply about the culture it depicts?

Sample Thesis:

In the short story "Marriage is A Private Affair," by Chinua Achebe, the character's cultural history plays a big part in the struggles he faces.



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Step 4: Choose a Critical Lens

Decide which critical lens you'd like to use to look more deeply at the story you chose. Briefly explain which lens you've chosen and what you think putting on that lens reveals to the reader. It might help to fill out the Elements of Fiction worksheet through the lens you've chosen. Ask yourself, "What pops out about the title if I use this lens? What pops out about the characters if I use this lens?"

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46. Short Fiction Anthology

DR. KAREN PALMER

Welcome to the Short Fiction Anthology! Here you will find short biographies of each author and either the full text of the author's short story or a link to the most stable online version (for newer works not in the public domain). Short stories are presented here in alphabetical order by the author's last name. You may use the links below to bring you directly to each author.

- Kate Chopin, "The Story of an Hour"
- Sandra Cisneros, "Puro Amor"
- William Faulkner, "A Rose for Emily"
- Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper"
- Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown"
- O. Henry, "The Gift of the Magi"
- James Joyce, "Araby"
- Jamaica Kincaid, "Girl"
- Guy de Maupassant, "The Diamond Necklace"
- Tim O'Brien, "The Things They Carried"
- Flannery O'Connor, "A Good Man is Hard to Find"
- Katherine Porter, "Flowering Judas"
- Amy Tan, "Two Kinds"
- Alice Walker, "Everyday Use"
- Kurt Vonnegut, "Harrison Bergeron"

Kate Chopin (1851-1904)

Kate Chopin in the Public Domain

Katherine O'Flaherty was born in 1850 in St. Louis, Missouri, to an affluent family. She was formally educated in a Catholic school for girls. At age twenty, she married Oscar Chopin and moved with him to New Orleans. In 1879, the couple relocated to Cloutierville, an area where many members of the Creole community lived. The Chopins lived, worked, and raised their six children together until Oscar died unexpectedly in 1882, leaving his wife in serious debt. Chopin worked and sold the family business to pay off the debt, eventually moving back to St. Louis to be near her mother, who died soon after Chopin returned.

After experiencing these losses, Chopin turned to reading and writing to deal with her grief. Her experiences in New Orleans and Cloutierville provided rich writing material, and during the 1890s, she enjoyed success as a writer, publishing a number of stories in the local colour tradition. By 1899, her style had evolved, and her important work *The Awakening*, published that year, shocked the Victorian audience of the time in its frank depiction of a woman's sexuality. Unprepared for the negative critical reception that ensued, Chopin retreated from the publishing world. She died unexpectedly a few years later in 1904 from a brain hemorrhage.

In her lifetime, Chopin was known primarily as a regional writer who produced a number of important short stories, many of which were collected in *Bayou Folk* in 1894. Her groundbreaking novel *The*

Awakening (1899) was ahead of its time in the examination of the rigid cultural and legal boundaries placed on women, which limited or prevented them from living authentic, fully self-directed lives.

Listen to a podcast on Kate Chopin.

Chopin's "The Story of an Hour" was published in *Vogue* magazine on December 6, 1894. Learn more about "The Story of an Hour," other Kate Chopin stories, Chopin's two novels, her themes, and her life on this website.

"The Story of an Hour"

Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble, great care was taken to break to her as gently as possible the news of her husband's death.

It was her sister Josephine who told her, in broken sentences; veiled hints that revealed in half concealing. Her husband's friend Richards was there, too, near her. It was he who had been in the newspaper office when intelligence of the railroad disaster was received, with Brently Mallard's name leading the list of "killed." He had only taken the time to assure himself of its truth by a second telegram, and had hastened to forestall any less careful, less tender friend in bearing the sad message.

She did not hear the story as many women have heard the same, with a paralyzed inability to accept its significance. She wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment, in her sister's arms. When the storm of

grief had spent itself she went away to her room alone. She would have no one follow her.

There stood, facing the open window, a comfortable, roomy armchair. Into this she sank, pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach into her soul.

She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life. The delicious breath of rain was in the air. In the street below a peddler was crying his wares. The notes of a distant song which some one was singing reached her faintly, and countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves.

There were patches of blue sky showing here and there through the clouds that had met and piled one above the other in the west facing her window.

She sat with her head thrown back upon the cushion of the chair, quite motionless, except when a sob came up into her throat and shook her, as a child who has cried itself to sleep continues to sob in its dreams.

She was young, with a fair, calm face, whose lines bespoke repression and even a certain strength. But now there was a dull stare in her eyes, whose gaze was fixed away off yonder on one of those patches of blue sky. It was not a glance of reflection, but rather indicated a suspension of intelligent thought.

There was something coming to her and she was waiting for it, fearfully. What was it? She did not know; it was too subtle and elusive to name. But she felt it,

creeping out of the sky, reaching toward her through the sounds, the scents, the color that filled the air.

Now her bosom rose and fell tumultuously. She was beginning to recognize this thing that was approaching to possess her, and she was striving to beat it back with her will—as powerless as her two white slender hands would have been.

When she abandoned herself a little whispered word escaped her slightly parted lips. She said it over and over under her breath: “free, free, free!” The vacant stare and the look of terror that had followed it went from her eyes. They stayed keen and bright. Her pulses beat fast, and the coursing blood warmed and relaxed every inch of her body.

She did not stop to ask if it were or were not a monstrous joy that held her. A clear and exalted perception enabled her to dismiss the suggestion as trivial.

She knew that she would weep again when she saw the kind, tender hands folded in death; the face that had never looked save with love upon her, fixed and gray and dead. But she saw beyond that bitter moment a long procession of years to come that would belong to her absolutely. And she opened and spread her arms out to them in welcome.

There would be no one to live for her during those coming years; she would live for herself. There would be no powerful will bending hers in that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose a private will upon a fellow- creature. A kind

intention or a cruel intention made the act seem no less a crime as she looked upon it in that brief moment of illumination.

And yet she had loved him—sometimes. Often she had not. What did it matter! What could love, the unsolved mystery, count for in face of this possession of self-assertion which she suddenly recognized as the strongest impulse of her being!

"Free! Body and soul free!" she kept whispering.

Josephine was kneeling before the closed door with her lips to the keyhole, imploring for admission. "Louise, open the door! I beg; open the door—you will make yourself ill. What are you doing, Louise? For heaven's sake open the door."

"Go away. I am not making myself ill." No; she was drinking in a very elixir of life through that open window.

Her fancy was running riot along those days ahead of her. Spring days, and summer days, and all sorts of days that would be her own. She breathed a quick prayer that life might be long. It was only yesterday she had thought with a shudder that life might be long.

She arose at length and opened the door to her sister's importunities. There was a feverish triumph in her eyes, and she carried herself unwittingly like a goddess of Victory. She clasped her sister's waist, and together they descended the stairs. Richards stood waiting for them at the bottom.

Some one was opening the front door with a latchkey.

It was Brently Mallard who entered, a little travel-stained, composedly carrying his grip-sack and umbrella. He had been far from the scene of accident, and did not even know there had been one. He stood amazed at Josephine's piercing cry; at Richards' quick motion to screen him from the view of his wife.

But Richards was too late.

When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease—of joy that kills.

Questions for Consideration

1. How is Mrs. Mallard's character developed? Do you see examples of exposition, where the narrator simply tells us information about the protagonist? In addition, does Chopin portray particular emotional responses, thoughts, and actions to reveal Mrs. Mallard's character? If so, how so? How does she employ point of view in this story?
2. What is your impression of Brently Mallard? What elements of the story generate this impression?
3. How is setting (both the historical period and the physical atmosphere of the story) used to contribute to the story's meaning?
4. What is Mrs. Mallard's social class? What clues lead you to this conclusion?
5. What is the story's central conflict? Does Mrs. Mallard change, as we might expect a protagonist to do?

6. What are the important themes of this story?

You may enter your responses to the discussion questions in the following form.

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Watch a film version of "The Story of an Hour":

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Learn more about the status of women in Chopin's time.

Sandra Cisneros

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Sandra Cisneros (born December 20, 1954) is a Chicana writer. She is best known for her first novel *The House on Mango Street* (1983) and her subsequent short story collection *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories* (1991). Her work experiments with literary forms and investigates emerging subject positions. She is the recipient of numerous awards, including a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship, was awarded one of 25 new Ford Foundation Art of Change fellowships in 2017, and is regarded as a key figure in Chicana literature.

Cisneros's early life provided many experiences she later drew on as a writer: she grew up as the only daughter in a family of six brothers, which often made her feel isolated, and they constantly migration between Mexico and the United States. Cisneros's work deals with the formation of Chicana identity, exploring the challenges of being caught between Mexican and Anglo-American cultures, facing the misogynist attitudes present in both these cultures, and experiencing poverty.

Cisneros has held a variety of professional positions, working as a teacher, a counselor, a college recruiter, a poet-in-the-schools, and an arts administrator, and has maintained a strong commitment to community and literary causes. Cisneros currently resides in Mexico.

An interview with Cisneros:

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"Puro Amor" was published in the *Washington Post* in 2015.

"Puro Amor" published in the *Washington Post*. Scroll down to find the story. (It's the second one on the page.)

Questions to Consider

1. What does the story say about love?

2. What are the plot and the setting of the short story “Puro Amor”? How dothe plot and the setting relate to the theme of the story?
3. Describe the characters in “Puro Amor.” What details from the story help the reader to formulate an idea of what kind of people they are?

You may enter your responses to the discussion questions in the following form.

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Cisneros discusses “Puro Amor”:

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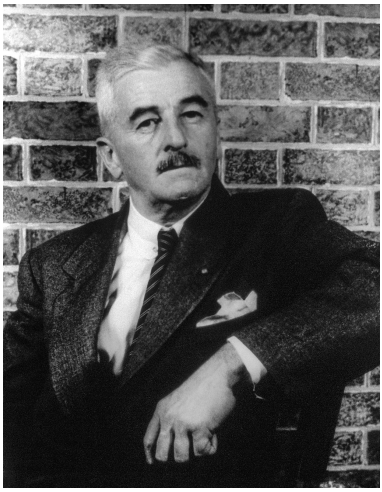
William Faulkner



William Faulkner Public Domain Image

William 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, *Mosquitos* (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. Other novels include As I Lay Dying (1930) and Absalom, Absalom! (1936).

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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. One of Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha stories is included here: "A Rose for

Emily," one of his many tales about the decline of formerly-great Southern families.

"A Rose for Emily"

Questions to Consider

1. What does the story say about love?
2. Why is the discovery of the single grey hair at the end of "A Rose for Emily" significant?
3. 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 "A Rose for Emily" shows the human heart in conflict with itself.

You may enter your responses to the discussion questions in the following form.

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Video of “A Rose for Emily”:

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Charlotte Perkins Gilman

Charlotte Perkins Gilman Public Domain

As she writes in her autobiography, Charlotte Perkins Gilman had one overriding goal in her life: "the improvement of the human race." The niece of both the abolitionist Harriet Beecher Stowe and the suffragist Isabella Beecher Hooker, Gilman was one of the most important feminist writers, editors, and activists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She led an unconventional life that directly inspired her poetry, fiction, and nonfiction alike. At the age of thirty-four, she divorced a husband who sought to "domesticate" her, leaving both him and her daughter to pursue an independent career authoring works of poetry, fiction, and social criticism; editing and publishing her own feminist magazine, *Forerunner*; and lecturing for the American Woman Suffrage Association and other organizations on the need for social reform to ensure equality between men and women. In the 1890s, Gil- man published three works that solidified her reputation as both a major American writer and a groundbreaking feminist theorist: a well-received collection of feminist poems, *In This Our World* (1893); the groundbreaking work of social theory, *Women and Economics: A Study of the Economic Relation between Men and Women as a Factor in Social Evolution* (1898), in which she criticized the economic dependency of women upon men; and the shocking short story, "The Yellow Wall-Paper" (1892). Gilman remarried in 1900 and over the course of the first three decades of the twentieth century continued to edit,

lecture, and publish works that advocated for the progressive reform of society. In her utopian novel *Herland* (1915), for example, she imagines a peaceful and ecologically sustainable society comprised solely of women who use technology and not men to reproduce.

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While presented in the guise of a gothic tale of terror, "The Yellow Wall-Paper" is a fine example of political realism. Gilman based the story on her own life. After giving birth to her daughter, Gilman fell into a state of depression and was sent to a clinic for treatment. Her doctor, a world-famous neurologist, advised her to quit all creative and intellectual activity and instead dedicate herself wholly to a private domestic routine. However, this "rest-cure" only further deepened Gilman's depression and so she sought—and found—a

cure for herself in her true callings: the literary and political work to which she dedicated the rest of her life.

"The Yellow Wallpaper"

It is very seldom that mere ordinary people like John and myself secure ancestral halls for the summer.

A colonial mansion, a hereditary estate, I would say a haunted house, and reach the height of romantic felicity—but that would be asking too much of fate!

Still I will proudly declare that there is something queer about it.

Else, why should it be let so cheaply? And why have stood so long untenanted?

John laughs at me, of course, but one expects that in marriage.

John is practical in the extreme. He has no patience with faith, an intense horror of superstition, and he scoffs openly at any talk of things not to be felt and seen and put down in figures.

John is a physician, and *perhaps*—(I would not say it to a living soul, of course, but this is dead paper and a great relief to my mind)—*perhaps* that is one reason I do not get well faster.

You see, he does not believe I am sick!

And what can one do?

If a physician of high standing, and one's own husband, assures friends and relatives that there is really nothing the matter with one but temporary

nervous depression—a slight hysterical tendency—what is one to do?

My brother is also a physician, and also of high standing, and he says the same thing.

So I take phosphates or phosphites—whichever it is, and tonics, and journeys, and air, and exercise, and am absolutely forbidden to "work" until I am well again.

Personally, I disagree with their ideas.

Personally, I believe that congenial work, with excitement and change, would do me good.

But what is one to do?

I did write for a while in spite of them; but it *does* exhaust me a good deal—having to be so sly about it, or else meet with heavy opposition.

I sometimes fancy that in my condition if I had less opposition and more society and stimulus—but John says the very worst thing I can do is to think about my condition, and I confess it always makes me feel bad.

So I will let it alone and talk about the house.

The most beautiful place! It is quite alone, standing well back from the road, quite three miles from the village. It makes me think of English places that you read about, for there are hedges and walls and gates that lock, and lots of separate little houses for the gardeners and people.

There is a *delicious* garden! I never saw such a garden—large and shady, full of box-bordered paths, and

lined with long grape-covered arbors with seats under them.

There were greenhouses, too, but they are all broken now.

There was some legal trouble, I believe, something about the heirs and co-heirs; anyhow, the place has been empty for years.

That spoils my ghostliness, I am afraid; but I don't care—there is something strange about the house—I can feel it.

I even said so to John one moonlight evening, but he said what I felt was a *draught*, and shut the window.

I get unreasonably angry with John sometimes. I'm sure I never used to be so sensitive. I think it is due to this nervous condition.

But John says if I feel so I shall neglect proper self-control; so I take pains to control myself,—before him, at least,—and that makes me very tired.

I don't like our room a bit. I wanted one downstairs that opened on the piazza and had roses all over the window, and such pretty old-fashioned chintz hangings! but John would not hear of it.

He said there was only one window and not room for two beds, and no near room for him if he took another.

He is very careful and loving, and hardly lets me stir without special direction.

I have a schedule prescription for each hour in the

day; he takes all care from me, and so I feel basely ungrateful not to value it more.

He said we came here solely on my account, that I was to have perfect rest and all the air I could get. “Your exercise depends on your strength, my dear,” said he, “and your food somewhat on your appetite; but air you can absorb all the time.” So we took the nursery, at the top of the house.

It is a big, airy room, the whole floor nearly, with windows that look all ways, and air and sunshine galore. It was nursery first and then playground and gymnasium, I should judge; for the windows are barred for little children, and there are rings and things in the walls.

The paint and paper look as if a boys’ school had used it. It is stripped off—the paper—in great patches all around the head of my bed, about as far as I can reach, and in a great place on the other side of the room low down. I never saw a worse paper in my life.

One of those sprawling flamboyant patterns committing every artistic sin.

It is dull enough to confuse the eye in following, pronounced enough to constantly irritate, and provoke study, and when you follow the lame, uncertain curves for a little distance they suddenly commit suicide—plunge off at outrageous angles, destroy themselves in unheard-of contradictions.

The color is repellant, almost revolting; a smouldering, unclean yellow, strangely faded by the slow-turning sunlight.

It is a dull yet lurid orange in some places, a sickly sulphur tint in others.

No wonder the children hated it! I should hate it myself if I had to live in this room long.

There comes John, and I must put this away,—he hates to have me write a word.

We have been here two weeks, and I haven't felt like writing before, since that first day.

I am sitting by the window now, up in this atrocious nursery, and there is nothing to hinder my writing as much as I please, save lack of strength.

John is away all day, and even some nights when his cases are serious.

I am glad my case is not serious!

But these nervous troubles are dreadfully depressing.

John does not know how much I really suffer. He knows there is no *reason* to suffer, and that satisfies him.

Of course it is only nervousness. It does weigh on me so not to do my duty in any way!

I meant to be such a help to John, such a real rest and comfort, and here I am a comparative burden already!

Nobody would believe what an effort it is to do what little I am able—to dress and entertain, and order things.

It is fortunate Mary is so good with the baby. Such a dear baby!

And yet I *cannot* be with him, it makes me so nervous.

I suppose John never was nervous in his life. He laughs at me so about this wallpaper!

At first he meant to repaper the room, but afterwards he said that I was letting it get the better of me, and that nothing was worse for a nervous patient than to give way to such fancies.

He said that after the wallpaper was changed it would be the heavy bedstead, and then the barred windows, and then that gate at the head of the stairs, and so on.

"You know the place is doing you good," he said, "and really, dear, I don't care to renovate the house just for a three months' rental."

"Then do let us go downstairs," I said, "there are such pretty rooms there."

Then he took me in his arms and called me a blessed little goose, and said he would go down cellar if I wished, and have it whitewashed into the bargain.

But he is right enough about the beds and windows and things.

It is as airy and comfortable a room as any one need wish, and, of course, I would not be so silly as to make him uncomfortable just for a whim.

I'm really getting quite fond of the big room, all but that horrid paper.

Out of one window I can see the garden, those mysterious deep-shaded arbors, the riotous old-fashioned flowers, and bushes and gnarly trees.

Out of another I get a lovely view of the bay and a

little private wharf belonging to the estate. There is a beautiful shaded lane that runs down there from the house. I always fancy I see people walking in these numerous paths and arbors, but John has cautioned me not to give way to fancy in the least. He says that with my imaginative power and habit of story-making a nervous weakness like mine is sure to lead to all manner of excited fancies, and that I ought to use my will and good sense to check the tendency. So I try.

I think sometimes that if I were only well enough to write a little it would relieve the press of ideas and rest me.

But I find I get pretty tired when I try.

It is so discouraging not to have any advice and companionship about my work. When I get really well John says we will ask Cousin Henry and Julia down for a long visit; but he says he would as soon put fire-works in my pillow-case as to let me have those stimulating people about now.

I wish I could get well faster.

But I must not think about that. This paper looks to me as if it *knew* what a vicious influence it had!

There is a recurrent spot where the pattern lolls like a broken neck and two bulbous eyes stare at you upside-down.

I get positively angry with the impertinence of it and the everlastingness. Up and down and sideways they crawl, and those absurd, unblinking eyes are everywhere. There is one place where two breadths

didn't match, and the eyes go all up and down the line, one a little higher than the other.

I never saw so much expression in an inanimate thing before, and we all know how much expression they have! I used to lie awake as a child and get more entertainment and terror out of blank walls and plain furniture than most children could find in a toy-store.

I remember what a kindly wink the knobs of our big old bureau used to have, and there was one chair that always seemed like a strong friend.

I used to feel that if any of the other things looked too fierce I could always hop into that chair and be safe.

The furniture in this room is no worse than inharmonious, however, for we had to bring it all from downstairs. I suppose when this was used as a playroom they had to take the nursery things out, and no wonder! I never saw such ravages as the children have made here.

The wallpaper, as I said before, is torn off in spots, and it sticketh closer than a brother—they must have had perseverance as well as hatred.

Then the floor is scratched and gouged and splintered, the plaster itself is dug out here and there, and this great heavy bed, which is all we found in the room, looks as if it had been through the wars.

But I don't mind it a bit—only the paper.

There comes John's sister. Such a dear girl as she is, and so careful of me! I must not let her find me writing.

She is a perfect, and enthusiastic housekeeper, and

hopes for no better profession. I verily believe she thinks it is the writing which made me sick!

But I can write when she is out, and see her a long way off from these windows.

There is one that commands the road, a lovely, shaded, winding road, and one that just looks off over the country. A lovely country, too, full of great elms and velvet meadows.

This wallpaper has a kind of sub-pattern in a different shade, a particularly irritating one, for you can only see it in certain lights, and not clearly then.

But in the places where it isn't faded, and where the sun is just so, I can see a strange, provoking, formless sort of figure, that seems to sulk about behind that silly and conspicuous front design.

There's sister on the stairs!

Well, the Fourth of July is over! The people are gone and I am tired out. John thought it might do me good to see a little company, so we just had mother and Nellie and the children down for a week.

Of course I didn't do a thing. Jennie sees to everything now.

But it tired me all the same.

John says if I don't pick up faster he shall send me to Weir Mitchell in the fall.

But I don't want to go there at all. I had a friend who was in his hands once, and she says he is just like John and my brother, only more so!

Besides, it is such an undertaking to go so far.

I don't feel as if it was worth while to turn my hand over for anything, and I'm getting dreadfully fretful and querulous.

I cry at nothing, and cry most of the time.

Of course I don't when John is here, or anybody else, but when I am alone.

And I am alone a good deal just now. John is kept in town very often by serious cases, and Jennie is good and lets me alone when I want her to.

So I walk a little in the garden or down that lovely lane, sit on the porch under the roses, and lie down up here a good deal.

I'm getting really fond of the room in spite of the wallpaper. Perhaps *because* of the wallpaper.

It dwells in my mind so!

I lie here on this great immovable bed—it is nailed down, I believe—and follow that pattern about by the hour. It is as good as gymnastics, I assure you. I start, we'll say, at the bottom, down in the corner over there where it has not been touched, and I determine for the thousandth time that I *will* follow that pointless pattern to some sort of a conclusion.

I know a little of the principle of design, and I know this thing was not arranged on any laws of radiation, or alternation, or repetition, or symmetry, or anything else that I ever heard of.

It is repeated, of course, by the breadths, but not otherwise.

Looked at in one way each breadth stands alone, the bloated curves and flourishes—a kind of "debased Romanesque" with *delirium tremens*—go waddling up and down in isolated columns of fatuity.

But, on the other hand, they connect diagonally, and the sprawling outlines run off in great slanting waves of optic horror, like a lot of wallowing seaweeds in full chase.

The whole thing goes horizontally, too, at least it seems so, and I exhaust myself in trying to distinguish the order of its going in that direction.

They have used a horizontal breadth for a frieze, and that adds wonderfully to the confusion.

There is one end of the room where it is almost intact, and there, when the cross-lights fade and the low sun shines directly upon it, I can almost fancy radiation after all,—the interminable grotesques seem to form around a common centre and rush off in headlong plunges of equal distraction.

It makes me tired to follow it. I will take a nap, I guess.

I don't know why I should write this.

I don't want to.

I don't feel able.

And I know John would think it absurd. But I *must* say what I feel and think in some way—it is such a relief!

But the effort is getting to be greater than the relief.

Half the time now I am awfully lazy, and lie down ever so much.

John says I musn't lose my strength, and has me take cod-liver oil and lots of tonics and things, to say nothing of ale and wine and rare meat.

Dear John! He loves me very dearly, and hates to have me sick. I tried to have a real earnest reasonable talk with him the other day, and tell him how I wish he would let me go and make a visit to Cousin Henry and Julia.

But he said I wasn't able to go, nor able to stand it after I got there; and I did not make out a very good case for myself, for I was crying before I had finished.

It is getting to be a great effort for me to think straight. Just this nervous weakness, I suppose.

And dear John gathered me up in his arms, and just carried me upstairs and laid me on the bed, and sat by me and read to me till it tired my head.

He said I was his darling and his comfort and all he had, and that I must take care of myself for his sake, and keep well.

He says no one but myself can help me out of it, that I must use my will and self-control and not let any silly fancies run away with me.

There's one comfort, the baby is well and happy, and does not have to occupy this nursery with the horrid wallpaper.

If we had not used it that blessed child would have! What a fortunate escape! Why, I wouldn't have a child of

mine, an impressionable little thing, live in such a room for worlds.

I never thought of it before, but it is lucky that John kept me here after all. I can stand it so much easier than a baby, you see.

Of course I never mention it to them any more,—I am too wise,—but I keep watch of it all the same.

There are things in that paper that nobody knows but me, or ever will.

Behind that outside pattern the dim shapes get clearer every day.

It is always the same shape, only very numerous.

And it is like a woman stooping down and creeping about behind that pattern. I don't like it a bit. I wonder—I begin to think—I wish John would take me away from here!

It is so hard to talk with John about my case, because he is so wise, and because he loves me so.

But I tried it last night.

It was moonlight. The moon shines in all around, just as the sun does.

I hate to see it sometimes, it creeps so slowly, and always comes in by one window or another.

John was asleep and I hated to waken him, so I kept still and watched the moonlight on that undulating wallpaper till I felt creepy.

The faint figure behind seemed to shake the pattern, just as if she wanted to get out.

I got up softly and went to feel and see if the paper *did* move, and when I came back John was awake.

"What is it, little girl?" he said. "Don't go walking about like that—you'll get cold."

I thought it was a good time to talk, so I told him that I really was not gaining here, and that I wished he would take me away.

"Why darling!" said he, "our lease will be up in three weeks, and I can't see how to leave before.

"The repairs are not done at home, and I cannot possibly leave town just now. Of course if you were in any danger I could and would, but you really are better, dear, whether you can see it or not. I am a doctor, dear, and I know. You are gaining flesh and color, your appetite is better. I feel really much easier about you."

"I don't weigh a bit more," said I, "nor as much; and my appetite may be better in the evening, when you are here, but it is worse in the morning when you are away."

"Bless her little heart!" said he with a big hug; "she shall be as sick as she pleases! But now let's improve the shining hours by going to sleep, and talk about it in the morning!"

"And you won't go away?" I asked gloomily.

"Why, how can I, dear? It is only three weeks more and then we will take a nice little trip of a few days while Jennie is getting the house ready. Really, dear, you are better!"

"Better in body perhaps"—I began, and stopped short, for he sat up straight and looked at me with such a

stern, reproachful look that I could not say another word.

"My darling," said he, "I beg of you, for my sake and for our child's sake, as well as for your own, that you will never for one instant let that idea enter your mind! There is nothing so dangerous, so fascinating, to a temperament like yours. It is a false and foolish fancy. Can you not trust me as a physician when I tell you so?"

So of course I said no more on that score, and we went to sleep before long. He thought I was asleep first, but I wasn't,—I lay there for hours trying to decide whether that front pattern and the back pattern really did move together or separately.

On a pattern like this, by daylight, there is a lack of sequence, a defiance of law, that is a constant irritant to a normal mind.

The color is hideous enough, and unreliable enough, and infuriating enough, but the pattern is torturing.

You think you have mastered it, but just as you get well under way in following, it turns a back somersault and there you are. It slaps you in the face, knocks you down, and tramples upon you. It is like a bad dream.

The outside pattern is a florid arabesque, reminding one of a fungus. If you can imagine a toadstool in joints, an interminable string of toadstools, budding and sprouting in endless convolutions,—why, that is something like it.

That is, sometimes!

There is one marked peculiarity about this paper, a

thing nobody seems to notice but myself, and that is that it changes as the light changes.

When the sun shoots in through the east window—I always watch for that first long, straight ray—it changes so quickly that I never can quite believe it.

That is why I watch it always.

By moonlight—the moon shines in all night when there is a moon—I wouldn't know it was the same paper.

At night in any kind of light, in twilight, candlelight, lamplight, and worst of all by moonlight, it becomes bars! The outside pattern I mean, and the woman behind it is as plain as can be.

I didn't realize for a long time what the thing was that showed behind,—that dim sub-pattern,—but now I am quite sure it is a woman.

By daylight she is subdued, quiet. I fancy it is the pattern that keeps her so still. It is so puzzling. It keeps me quiet by the hour.

I lie down ever so much now. John says it is good for me, and to sleep all I can.

Indeed, he started the habit by making me lie down for an hour after each meal.

It is a very bad habit, I am convinced, for, you see, I don't sleep.

And that cultivates deceit, for I don't tell them I'm awake,—oh, no!

The fact is, I am getting a little afraid of John.

He seems very queer sometimes, and even Jennie has an inexplicable look.

It strikes me occasionally, just as a scientific hypothesis, that perhaps it is the paper!

I have watched John when he did not know I was looking, and come into the room suddenly on the most innocent excuses, and I've caught him several times *looking at the paper*! And Jennie too. I caught Jennie with her hand on it once.

She didn't know I was in the room, and when I asked her in a quiet, a very quiet voice, with the most restrained manner possible, what she was doing with the paper she turned around as if she had been caught stealing, and looked quite angry—asked me why I should frighten her so!

Then she said that the paper stained everything it touched, that she had found yellow smooches on all my clothes and John's, and she wished we would be more careful!

Did not that sound innocent? But I know she was studying that pattern, and I am determined that nobody shall find it out but myself!

Life is very much more exciting now than it used to be. You see I have something more to expect, to look forward to, to watch. I really do eat better, and am more quiet than I was.

John is so pleased to see me improve! He laughed a little the other day, and said I seemed to be flourishing in spite of my wallpaper.

I turned it off with a laugh. I had no intention of telling him it was *because* of the wallpaper—he would make fun of me. He might even want to take me away.

I don't want to leave now until I have found it out. There is a week more, and I think that will be enough.

I'm feeling ever so much better! I don't sleep much at night, for it is so interesting to watch developments; but I sleep a good deal in the daytime.

In the daytime it is tiresome and perplexing.

There are always new shoots on the fungus, and new shades of yellow all over it. I cannot keep count of them, though I have tried conscientiously.

It is the strangest yellow, that wallpaper! It makes me think of all the yellow things I ever saw—not beautiful ones like buttercups, but old foul, bad yellow things.

But there is something else about that paper—the smell! I noticed it the moment we came into the room, but with so much air and sun it was not bad. Now we have had a week of fog and rain, and whether the windows are open or not, the smell is here.

It creeps all over the house.

I find it hovering in the dining-room, skulking in the parlor, hiding in the hall, lying in wait for me on the stairs.

It gets into my hair.

Even when I go to ride, if I turn my head suddenly and surprise it—there is that smell!

Such a peculiar odor, too! I have spent hours in trying to analyze it, to find what it smelled like.

It is not bad—at first, and very gentle, but quite the subtlest, most enduring odor I ever met.

In this damp weather it is awful. I wake up in the night and find it hanging over me.

It used to disturb me at first. I thought seriously of burning the house—to reach the smell.

But now I am used to it. The only thing I can think of that it is like is the *color* of the paper! A yellow smell.

There is a very funny mark on this wall, low down, near the mopboard. A streak that runs round the room. It goes behind every piece of furniture, except the bed, a long, straight, even *smooch*, as if it had been rubbed over and over.

I wonder how it was done and who did it, and what they did it for. Round and round and round—round and round and round—it makes me dizzy!

I really have discovered something at last.

Through watching so much at night, when it changes so, I have finally found out.

The front pattern *does* move—and no wonder! The woman behind shakes it!

Sometimes I think there are a great many women behind, and sometimes only one, and she crawls around fast, and her crawling shakes it all over.

Then in the very bright spots she keeps still, and in

the very shady spots she just takes hold of the bars and shakes them hard.

And she is all the time trying to climb through. But nobody could climb through that pattern—it strangles so; I think that is why it has so many heads.

They get through, and then the pattern strangles them off and turns them upside-down, and makes their eyes white!

If those heads were covered or taken off it would not be half so bad.

I think that woman gets out in the daytime!

And I'll tell you why—privately—I've seen her!

I can see her out of every one of my windows!

It is the same woman, I know, for she is always creeping, and most women do not creep by daylight.

I see her on that long shaded lane, creeping up and down. I see her in those dark grape arbors, creeping all around the garden.

I see her on that long road under the trees, creeping along, and when a carriage comes she hides under the blackberry vines.

I don't blame her a bit. It must be very humiliating to be caught creeping by daylight!

I always lock the door when I creep by daylight. I can't do it at night, for I know John would suspect something at once.

And John is so queer now, that I don't want to irritate him. I wish he would take another room! Besides, I don't

want anybody to get that woman out at night but myself.

I often wonder if I could see her out of all the windows at once.

But, turn as fast as I can, I can only see out of one at one time.

And though I always see her she *may* be able to creep faster than I can turn!

I have watched her sometimes away off in the open country, creeping as fast as a cloud shadow in a high wind.

If only that top pattern could be gotten off from the under one! I mean to try it, little by little.

I have found out another funny thing, but I shan't tell it this time! It does not do to trust people too much.

There are only two more days to get this paper off, and I believe John is beginning to notice. I don't like the look in his eyes.

And I heard him ask Jennie a lot of professional questions about me. She had a very good report to give.

She said I slept a good deal in the daytime.

John knows I don't sleep very well at night, for all I'm so quiet!

He asked me all sorts of questions, too, and pretended to be very loving and kind.

As if I couldn't see through him!

Still, I don't wonder he acts so, sleeping under this paper for three months.

It only interests me, but I feel sure John and Jennie are secretly affected by it.

Hurrah! This is the last day, but it is enough. John is to stay in town over night, and won't be out until this evening.

Jennie wanted to sleep with me—the sly thing! but I told her I should undoubtedly rest better for a night all alone.

That was clever, for really I wasn't alone a bit! As soon as it was moonlight, and that poor thing began to crawl and shake the pattern, I got up and ran to help her.

I pulled and she shook, I shook and she pulled, and before morning we had peeled off yards of that paper.

A strip about as high as my head and half around the room.

And then when the sun came and that awful pattern began to laugh at me I declared I would finish it to-day!

We go away to-morrow, and they are moving all my furniture down again to leave things as they were before.

Jennie looked at the wall in amazement, but I told her merrily that I did it out of pure spite at the vicious thing.

She laughed and said she wouldn't mind doing it herself, but I must not get tired.

How she betrayed herself that time!

But I am here, and no person touches this paper but me—not *alive*!

She tried to get me out of the room—it was too patent! But I said it was so quiet and empty and clean now that I believed I would lie down again and sleep all I could; and not to wake me even for dinner—I would call when I woke.

So now she is gone, and the servants are gone, and the things are gone, and there is nothing left but that great bedstead nailed down, with the canvas mattress we found on it.

We shall sleep downstairs to-night, and take the boat home to-morrow.

I quite enjoy the room, now it is bare again.

How those children did tear about here!

This bedstead is fairly gnawed!

But I must get to work.

I have locked the door and thrown the key down into the front path.

I don't want to go out, and I don't want to have anybody come in, till John comes.

I want to astonish him.

I've got a rope up here that even Jennie did not find. If that woman does get out, and tries to get away, I can tie her!

But I forgot I could not reach far without anything to stand on!

This bed will *not* move!

I tried to lift and push it until I was lame, and then I got so angry I bit off a little piece at one corner—but it hurt my teeth.

Then I peeled off all the paper I could reach standing on the floor. It sticks horribly and the pattern just enjoys it! All those strangled heads and bulbous eyes and waddling fungus growths just shriek with derision!

I am getting angry enough to do something desperate. To jump out of the window would be admirable exercise, but the bars are too strong even to try.

Besides I wouldn't do it. Of course not. I know well enough that a step like that is improper and might be misconstrued.

I don't like to *look* out of the windows even—there are so many of those creeping women, and they creep so fast.

I wonder if they all come out of that wallpaper as I did?

But I am securely fastened now by my well-hidden rope—you don't get *me* out in the road there!

I suppose I shall have to get back behind the pattern when it comes night, and that is hard!

It is so pleasant to be out in this great room and creep around as I please!

I don't want to go outside. I won't, even if Jennie asks me to.

For outside you have to creep on the ground, and everything is green instead of yellow.

But here I can creep smoothly on the floor, and my shoulder just fits in that long smooch around the wall, so I cannot lose my way.

Why, there's John at the door!

It is no use, young man, you can't open it!

How he does call and pound!

Now he's crying for an axe.

It would be a shame to break down that beautiful door!

"John dear!" said I in the gentlest voice, "the key is down by the front steps, under a plantain leaf!"

That silenced him for a few moments.

Then he said—very quietly indeed, "Open the door, my darling!"

"I can't," said I. "The key is down by the front door under a plantain leaf!"

And then I said it again, several times, very gently and slowly, and said it so often that he had to go and see, and he got it, of course, and came in. He stopped short by the door.

"What is the matter?" he cried. "For God's sake, what are you doing!"

I kept on creeping just the same, but I looked at him over my shoulder.

"I've got out at last," said I, "in spite of you and Jennie!

And I've pulled off most of the paper, so you can't put me back!"

Now why should that man have fainted? But he did, and right across my path by the wall, so that I had to creep over him every time!

Questions to Consider

1. As you read "The Yellow Wall-Paper," you will be tempted to diagnose the narrator as suffering from postpartum depression. However, does the source of the narrator's lingering illness reside entirely in her body? Consider other causes for her on-going malaise. Why isn't she getting better?
2. Consider how the narrator's loving doctor-husband John talks to and controls her. What does John allow—and, more importantly, forbid—his sick wife to think and do?
3. The narrator of this story is unreliable as she is suffering from mental illness, which leads her to misinterpret the nature of her confinement. For instance, the narrator presumes that she is confined within a child's former playroom. Close-read the details of the story's setting, contrasting the narrator's interpretation of the details of her room—the bars on the windows, for instance—with

your own sense of what these things mean.

You may enter your responses to the discussion questions in the following form.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://oer.pressbooks.pub/theworryfreewriter/?p=116#h5p-10

A video version of "The Yellow Wallpaper":

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Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864)

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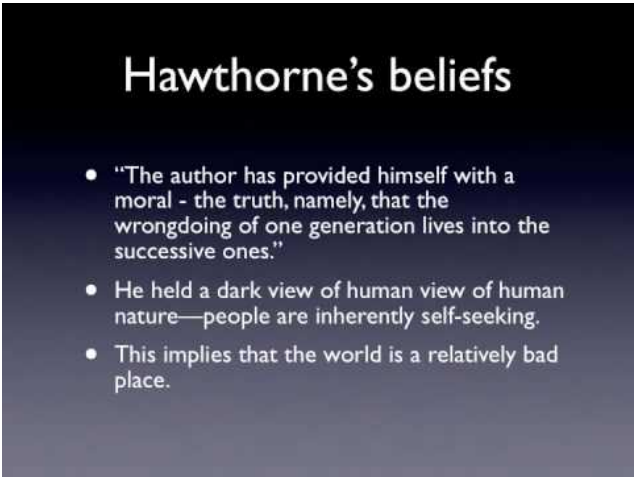
Nathaniel Hawthorne was born on July 4th, 1804 in Salem, Massachusetts to Nathaniel Hathorne and Elizabeth Clarke Manning. He died May 19, 1864, in Plymouth, NH, while on a tour of the White Mountains. After graduating from Bowdoin College in 1825, it is speculated, that he added the "w" to his last name in order to separate himself from his ancestor John Hathorne, who was the judge involved in the Salem Witch Trials.

Hawthorne's writing belongs in the Romanticism period and, more specifically, Dark Romanticism. This is a literary subgenre of Romanticism. It is centered on writers like Poe, Hawthorne and Melville. Typical themes in Dark Romanticism are human proneness to sin and self-destruction, human fallibility or error, and difficulties with social reform. These writings may adapt images of evil forms like devils, Satan, ghosts, Vampires, and werewolves.

Much of Hawthorne's work is inspired by Puritan New England. He writes historical fiction with common themes of sin, guilt and retribution. Early in his career, Hawthorne worked as the editor for the *American Magazine of Useful and Entertaining Knowledge.*

During this time he sent short stories, including "The Minister's Black Veil" and "Young Goodman Brown," to various magazines and annuals, although they did not draw much attention. Hawthorne did not become locally known until he published his collection of short stories into one volume, known as *Twice Told Tales*.

About Hawthorne:



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"Young Goodman Brown" was written by Hawthorne in 1835. This short story takes place in 17th century Puritan England during the Salem witch trials. It looks at the idea that humanity lives in a state of moral corruption.

YOUNG GOODMAN BROWN

by Nathaniel Hawthorne

Young Goodman Brown came forth at sunset into the street at Salem village; but put his head back, after crossing the threshold, to exchange a parting kiss with his young wife. And Faith, as the wife was aptly named, thrust her own pretty head into the street, letting the wind play with the pink ribbons of her cap while she called to Goodman Brown.

"Dearest heart," whispered she, softly and rather sadly, when her lips were close to his ear, "prithee put off your journey until sunrise and sleep in your own bed to-night. A lone woman is troubled with such dreams and such thoughts that she's afeard of herself sometimes. Pray tarry with me this night, dear husband, of all nights in the year."

"My love and my Faith," replied young Goodman Brown, "of all nights in the year, this one night must I tarry away from thee. My journey, as thou callest it, forth and back again, must needs be done 'twixt now and sunrise. What, my sweet, pretty wife, dost thou doubt me already, and we but three months married?"

"Then God bless you!" said Faith, with the pink ribbons; "and may you find all well when you come back."

"Amen!" cried Goodman Brown. "Say thy prayers, dear Faith, and go to bed at dusk, and no harm will come to thee."

So they parted; and the young man pursued his way

until, being about to turn the corner by the meeting-house, he looked back and saw the head of Faith still peeping after him with a melancholy air, in spite of her pink ribbons.

"Poor little Faith!" thought he, for his heart smote him. "What a wretch am I to leave her on such an errand! She talks of dreams, too. Methought as she spoke there was trouble in her face, as if a dream had warned her what work is to be done tonight. But no, no; 't would kill her to think it. Well, she's a blessed angel on earth; and after this one night I'll cling to her skirts and follow her to heaven."

With this excellent resolve for the future, Goodman Brown felt himself justified in making more haste on his present evil purpose. He had taken a dreary road, darkened by all the gloomiest trees of the forest, which barely stood aside to let the narrow path creep through, and closed immediately behind. It was all as lonely as could be; and there is this peculiarity in such a solitude, that the traveller knows not who may be concealed by the innumerable trunks and the thick boughs overhead; so that with lonely footsteps he may yet be passing through an unseen multitude.

"There may be a devilish Indian behind every tree," said Goodman Brown to himself; and he glanced fearfully behind him as he added, "What if the devil himself should be at my very elbow!"

His head being turned back, he passed a crook of the road, and, looking forward again, beheld the figure of a man, in grave and decent attire, seated at the foot of an

old tree. He arose at Goodman Brown's approach and walked onward side by side with him.

"You are late, Goodman Brown," said he. "The clock of the Old South was striking as I came through Boston, and that is full fifteen minutes ago."

"Faith kept me back a while," replied the young man, with a tremor in his voice, caused by the sudden appearance of his companion, though not wholly unexpected.

It was now deep dusk in the forest, and deepest in that part of it where these two were journeying. As nearly as could be discerned, the second traveller was about fifty years old, apparently in the same rank of life as Goodman Brown, and bearing a considerable resemblance to him, though perhaps more in expression than features. Still they might have been taken for father and son. And yet, though the elder person was as simply clad as the younger, and as simple in manner too, he had an indescribable air of one who knew the world, and who would not have felt abashed at the governor's dinner table or in King William's court, were it possible that his affairs should call him thither. But the only thing about him that could be fixed upon as remarkable was his staff, which bore the likeness of a great black snake, so curiously wrought that it might almost be seen to twist and wriggle itself like a living serpent. This, of course, must have been an ocular deception, assisted by the uncertain light.

"Come, Goodman Brown," cried his fellow-traveller,

"this is a dull pace for the beginning of a journey. Take my staff, if you are so soon weary."

"Friend," said the other, exchanging his slow pace for a full stop, "having kept covenant by meeting thee here, it is my purpose now to return whence I came. I have scruples touching the matter thou wot'st of."

"Sayest thou so?" replied he of the serpent, smiling apart. "Let us walk on, nevertheless, reasoning as we go; and if I convince thee not thou shalt turn back. We are but a little way in the forest yet."

"Too far! too far!" exclaimed the goodman, unconsciously resuming his walk. "My father never went into the woods on such an errand, nor his father before him. We have been a race of honest men and good Christians since the days of the martyrs; and shall I be the first of the name of Brown that ever took this path and kept—"

"Such company, thou wouldst say," observed the elder person, interpreting his pause. "Well said, Goodman Brown! I have been as well acquainted with your family as with ever a one among the Puritans; and that's no trifle to say. I helped your grandfather, the constable, when he lashed the Quaker woman so smartly through the streets of Salem; and it was I that brought your father a pitch-pine knot, kindled at my own hearth, to set fire to an Indian village, in King Philip's war. They were my good friends, both; and many a pleasant walk have we had along this path, and returned merrily after midnight. I would fain be friends with you for their sake."

"If it be as thou sayest," replied Goodman Brown, "I

marvel they never spoke of these matters; or, verily, I marvel not, seeing that the least rumor of the sort would have driven them from New England. We are a people of prayer, and good works to boot, and abide no such wickedness."

"Wickedness or not," said the traveller with the twisted staff, "I have a very general acquaintance here in New England. The deacons of many a church have drunk the communion wine with me; the selectmen of divers towns make me their chairman; and a majority of the Great and General Court are firm supporters of my interest. The governor and I, too—But these are state secrets."

"Can this be so?" cried Goodman Brown, with a stare of amazement at his undisturbed companion. "Howbeit, I have nothing to do with the governor and council; they have their own ways, and are no rule for a simple husbandman like me. But, were I to go on with thee, how should I meet the eye of that good old man, our minister, at Salem village? Oh, his voice would make me tremble both Sabbath day and lecture day."

Thus far the elder traveller had listened with due gravity; but now burst into a fit of irrepressible mirth, shaking himself so violently that his snake-like staff actually seemed to wriggle in sympathy.

"Ha! ha! ha!" shouted he again and again; then composing himself, "Well, go on, Goodman Brown, go on; but, prithee, don't kill me with laughing."

"Well, then, to end the matter at once," said Goodman Brown, considerably nettled, "there is my wife, Faith. It

would break her dear little heart; and I'd rather break my own."

"Nay, if that be the case," answered the other, "e'en go thy ways, Goodman Brown. I would not for twenty old women like the one hobbling before us that Faith should come to any harm."

As he spoke he pointed his staff at a female figure on the path, in whom Goodman Brown recognized a very pious and exemplary dame, who had taught him his catechism in youth, and was still his moral and spiritual adviser, jointly with the minister and Deacon Gookin.

"A marvel, truly, that Goody Cloyse should be so far in the wilderness at nightfall," said he. "But with your leave, friend, I shall take a cut through the woods until we have left this Christian woman behind. Being a stranger to you, she might ask whom I was consorting with and whither I was going."

"Be it so," said his fellow-traveller. "Betake you to the woods, and let me keep the path."

Accordingly the young man turned aside, but took care to watch his companion, who advanced softly along the road until he had come within a staff's length of the old dame. She, meanwhile, was making the best of her way, with singular speed for so aged a woman, and mumbling some indistinct words—a prayer, doubtless—as she went. The traveller put forth his staff and touched her withered neck with what seemed the serpent's tail.

"The devil!" screamed the pious old lady.

"Then Goody Cloyse knows her old friend?" observed the traveller, confronting her and leaning on his writhing stick.

"Ah, forsooth, and is it your worship indeed?" cried the good dame. "Yea, truly is it, and in the very image of my old gossip, Goodman Brown, the grandfather of the silly fellow that now is. But—would your worship believe it?—my broomstick hath strangely disappeared, stolen, as I suspect, by that unhanged witch, Goody Cory, and that, too, when I was all anointed with the juice of smallage, and cinquefoil, and wolf's bane."

"Mingled with fine wheat and the fat of a new-born babe," said the shape of old Goodman Brown.

"Ah, your worship knows the recipe," cried the old lady, cackling aloud. "So, as I was saying, being all ready for the meeting, and no horse to ride on, I made up my mind to foot it; for they tell me there is a nice young man to be taken into communion to-night. But now your good worship will lend me your arm, and we shall be there in a twinkling."

"That can hardly be," answered her friend. "I may not spare you my arm, Goody Cloyse; but here is my staff, if you will."

So saying, he threw it down at her feet, where, perhaps, it assumed life, being one of the rods which its owner had formerly lent to the Egyptian magi. Of this fact, however, Goodman Brown could not take cognizance. He had cast up his eyes in astonishment, and, looking down again, beheld neither Goody Cloyse nor the serpentine staff, but his fellow-traveller alone,

who waited for him as calmly as if nothing had happened.

"That old woman taught me my catechism," said the young man; and there was a world of meaning in this simple comment.

They continued to walk onward, while the elder traveller exhorted his companion to make good speed and persevere in the path, discoursing so aptly that his arguments seemed rather to spring up in the bosom of his auditor than to be suggested by himself. As they went, he plucked a branch of maple to serve for a walking stick, and began to strip it of the twigs and little boughs, which were wet with evening dew. The moment his fingers touched them they became strangely withered and dried up as with a week's sunshine. Thus the pair proceeded, at a good free pace, until suddenly, in a gloomy hollow of the road, Goodman Brown sat himself down on the stump of a tree and refused to go any farther.

"Friend," said he, stubbornly, "my mind is made up. Not another step will I budge on this errand. What if a wretched old woman do choose to go to the devil when I thought she was going to heaven: is that any reason why I should quit my dear Faith and go after her?"

"You will think better of this by and by," said his acquaintance, composedly. "Sit here and rest yourself a while; and when you feel like moving again, there is my staff to help you along." Without more words, he threw his companion the maple stick, and was as speedily out of sight as if he had vanished into the deepening gloom.

The young man sat a few moments by the roadside, applauding himself greatly, and thinking with how clear a conscience he should meet the minister in his morning walk, nor shrink from the eye of good old Deacon Gookin. And what calm sleep would be his that very night, which was to have been spent so wickedly, but so purely and sweetly now, in the arms of Faith! Amidst these pleasant and praiseworthy meditations, Goodman Brown heard the tramp of horses along the road, and deemed it advisable to conceal himself within the verge of the forest, conscious of the guilty purpose that had brought him thither, though now so happily turned from it.

On came the hoof tramps and the voices of the riders, two grave old voices, conversing soberly as they drew near. These mingled sounds appeared to pass along the road, within a few yards of the young man's hiding-place; but, owing doubtless to the depth of the gloom at that particular spot, neither the travellers nor their steeds were visible. Though their figures brushed the small boughs by the wayside, it could not be seen that they intercepted, even for a moment, the faint gleam from the strip of bright sky athwart which they must have passed. Goodman Brown alternately crouched and stood on tiptoe, pulling aside the branches and thrusting forth his head as far as he durst without discerning so much as a shadow. It vexed him the more, because he could have sworn, were such a thing possible, that he recognized the voices of the minister and Deacon Gookin, jogging along quietly, as they were wont to do, when bound to some ordination or

ecclesiastical council. While yet within hearing, one of the riders stopped to pluck a switch.

"Of the two, reverend sir," said the voice like the deacon's, "I had rather miss an ordination dinner than to-night's meeting. They tell me that some of our community are to be here from Falmouth and beyond, and others from Connecticut and Rhode Island, besides several of the Indian powwows, who, after their fashion, know almost as much deviltry as the best of us. Moreover, there is a goodly young woman to be taken into communion."

"Mighty well, Deacon Gookin!" replied the solemn old tones of the minister. "Spur up, or we shall be late. Nothing can be done, you know, until I get on the ground."

The hoofs clattered again; and the voices, talking so strangely in the empty air, passed on through the forest, where no church had ever been gathered or solitary Christian prayed. Whither, then, could these holy men be journeying so deep into the heathen wilderness? Young Goodman Brown caught hold of a tree for support, being ready to sink down on the ground, faint and overburdened with the heavy sickness of his heart. He looked up to the sky, doubting whether there really was a heaven above him. Yet there was the blue arch, and the stars brightening in it.

"With heaven above and Faith below, I will yet stand firm against the devil!" cried Goodman Brown.

While he still gazed upward into the deep arch of the firmament and had lifted his hands to pray, a cloud,

though no wind was stirring, hurried across the zenith and hid the brightening stars. The blue sky was still visible, except directly overhead, where this black mass of cloud was sweeping swiftly northward. Aloft in the air, as if from the depths of the cloud, came a confused and doubtful sound of voices. Once the listener fancied that he could distinguish the accents of towns-people of his own, men and women, both pious and ungodly, many of whom he had met at the communion table, and had seen others rioting at the tavern. The next moment, so indistinct were the sounds, he doubted whether he had heard aught but the murmur of the old forest, whispering without a wind. Then came a stronger swell of those familiar tones, heard daily in the sunshine at Salem village, but never until now from a cloud of night. There was one voice of a young woman, uttering lamentations, yet with an uncertain sorrow, and entreating for some favor, which, perhaps, it would grieve her to obtain; and all the unseen multitude, both saints and sinners, seemed to encourage her onward.

"Faith!" shouted Goodman Brown, in a voice of agony and desperation; and the echoes of the forest mocked him, crying, "Faith! Faith!" as if bewildered wretches were seeking her all through the wilderness.

The cry of grief, rage, and terror was yet piercing the night, when the unhappy husband held his breath for a response. There was a scream, drowned immediately in a louder murmur of voices, fading into far-off laughter, as the dark cloud swept away, leaving the clear and silent sky above Goodman Brown. But something fluttered lightly down through the air and caught on the

branch of a tree. The young man seized it, and beheld a pink ribbon.

"My Faith is gone!" cried he, after one stupefied moment. "There is no good on earth; and sin is but a name. Come, devil; for to thee is this world given."

And, maddened with despair, so that he laughed loud and long, did Goodman Brown grasp his staff and set forth again, at such a rate that he seemed to fly along the forest path rather than to walk or run. The road grew wilder and drearier and more faintly traced, and vanished at length, leaving him in the heart of the dark wilderness, still rushing onward with the instinct that guides mortal man to evil. The whole forest was peopled with frightful sounds—the creaking of the trees, the howling of wild beasts, and the yell of Indians; while sometimes the wind tolled like a distant church bell, and sometimes gave a broad roar around the traveller, as if all Nature were laughing him to scorn. But he was himself the chief horror of the scene, and shrank not from its other horrors.

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared Goodman Brown when the wind laughed at him.

"Let us hear which will laugh loudest. Think not to frighten me with your deviltry. Come witch, come wizard, come Indian powwow, come devil himself, and here comes Goodman Brown. You may as well fear him as he fear you."

In truth, all through the haunted forest there could be nothing more frightful than the figure of Goodman Brown. On he flew among the black pines, brandishing

his staff with frenzied gestures, now giving vent to an inspiration of horrid blasphemy, and now shouting forth such laughter as set all the echoes of the forest laughing like demons around him. The fiend in his own shape is less hideous than when he rages in the breast of man. Thus sped the demoniac on his course, until, quivering among the trees, he saw a red light before him, as when the felled trunks and branches of a clearing have been set on fire, and throw up their lurid blaze against the sky, at the hour of midnight. He paused, in a lull of the tempest that had driven him onward, and heard the swell of what seemed a hymn, rolling solemnly from a distance with the weight of many voices. He knew the tune; it was a familiar one in the choir of the village meeting-house. The verse died heavily away, and was lengthened by a chorus, not of human voices, but of all the sounds of the benighted wilderness pealing in awful harmony together. Goodman Brown cried out, and his cry was lost to his own ear by its unison with the cry of the desert.

In the interval of silence he stole forward until the light glared full upon his eyes. At one extremity of an open space, hemmed in by the dark wall of the forest, arose a rock, bearing some rude, natural resemblance either to an alter or a pulpit, and surrounded by four blazing pines, their tops aflame, their stems untouched, like candles at an evening meeting. The mass of foliage that had overgrown the summit of the rock was all on fire, blazing high into the night and fitfully illuminating the whole field. Each pendent twig and leafy festoon was in a blaze. As the red light arose and fell, a

numerous congregation alternately shone forth, then disappeared in shadow, and again grew, as it were, out of the darkness, peopling the heart of the solitary woods at once.

"A grave and dark-clad company," quoth Goodman Brown.

In truth they were such. Among them, quivering to and fro between gloom and splendor, appeared faces that would be seen next day at the council board of the province, and others which, Sabbath after Sabbath, looked devoutly heavenward, and benignantly over the crowded pews, from the holiest pulpits in the land. Some affirm that the lady of the governor was there. At least there were high dames well known to her, and wives of honored husbands, and widows, a great multitude, and ancient maidens, all of excellent repute, and fair young girls, who trembled lest their mothers should espy them. Either the sudden gleams of light flashing over the obscure field bedazzled Goodman Brown, or he recognized a score of the church members of Salem village famous for their especial sanctity. Good old Deacon Gookin had arrived, and waited at the skirts of that venerable saint, his revered pastor. But, irreverently consorting with these grave, reputable, and pious people, these elders of the church, these chaste dames and dewy virgins, there were men of dissolute lives and women of spotted fame, wretches given over to all mean and filthy vice, and suspected even of horrid crimes. It was strange to see that the good shrank not from the wicked, nor were the sinners abashed by the saints. Scattered also among their pale-faced enemies

were the Indian priests, or powwows, who had often scared their native forest with more hideous incantations than any known to English witchcraft.

"But where is Faith?" thought Goodman Brown; and, as hope came into his heart, he trembled. Another verse of the hymn arose, a slow and mournful strain, such as the pious love, but joined to words which expressed all that our nature can conceive of sin, and darkly hinted at far more. Unfathomable to mere mortals is the lore of fiends. Verse after verse was sung; and still the chorus of the desert swelled between like the deepest tone of a mighty organ; and with the final peal of that dreadful anthem there came a sound, as if the roaring wind, the rushing streams, the howling beasts, and every other voice of the unconcerted wilderness were mingling and according with the voice of guilty man in homage to the prince of all. The four blazing pines threw up a loftier flame, and obscurely discovered shapes and visages of horror on the smoke wreaths above the impious assembly. At the same moment the fire on the rock shot redly forth and formed a glowing arch above its base, where now appeared a figure. With reverence be it spoken, the figure bore no slight similitude, both in garb and manner, to some grave divine of the New England churches.

"Bring forth the converts!" cried a voice that echoed through the field and rolled into the forest.

At the word, Goodman Brown stepped forth from the shadow of the trees and approached the congregation, with whom he felt a loathful brotherhood by the sympathy of all that was wicked in his heart. He could

have well-nigh sworn that the shape of his own dead father beckoned him to advance, looking downward from a smoke wreath, while a woman, with dim features of despair, threw out her hand to warn him back. Was it his mother? But he had no power to retreat one step, nor to resist, even in thought, when the minister and good old Deacon Gookin seized his arms and led him to the blazing rock. Thither came also the slender form of a veiled female, led between Goody Cloyse, that pious teacher of the catechism, and Martha Carrier, who had received the devil's promise to be queen of hell. A rampant hag was she. And there stood the proselytes beneath the canopy of fire.

"Welcome, my children," said the dark figure, "to the communion of your race. Ye have found thus young your nature and your destiny. My children, look behind you!"

They turned; and flashing forth, as it were, in a sheet of flame, the fiend worshippers were seen; the smile of welcome gleamed darkly on every visage.

"There," resumed the sable form, "are all whom ye have reverenced from youth. Ye deemed them holier than yourselves, and shrank from your own sin, contrasting it with their lives of righteousness and prayerful aspirations heavenward. Yet here are they all in my worshipping assembly. This night it shall be granted you to know their secret deeds: how hoary-bearded elders of the church have whispered wanton words to the young maids of their households; how many a woman, eager for widows' weeds, has given her husband a drink at bedtime and let him sleep his last sleep in her bosom; how beardless youths have made

haste to inherit their fathers' wealth; and how fair damsels—blush not, sweet ones—have dug little graves in the garden, and bidden me, the sole guest to an infant's funeral. By the sympathy of your human hearts for sin ye shall scent out all the places—whether in church, bedchamber, street, field, or forest—where crime has been committed, and shall exult to behold the whole earth one stain of guilt, one mighty blood spot. Far more than this. It shall be yours to penetrate, in every bosom, the deep mystery of sin, the fountain of all wicked arts, and which inexhaustibly supplies more evil impulses than human power—than my power at its utmost—can make manifest in deeds. And now, my children, look upon each other."

They did so; and, by the blaze of the hell-kindled torches, the wretched man beheld his Faith, and the wife her husband, trembling before that unhallowed altar.

"Lo, there ye stand, my children," said the figure, in a deep and solemn tone, almost sad with its despairing awfulness, as if his once angelic nature could yet mourn for our miserable race.

"Depending upon one another's hearts, ye had still hoped that virtue were not all a dream. Now are ye undeceived. Evil is the nature of mankind. Evil must be your only happiness. Welcome again, my children, to the communion of your race."

"Welcome," repeated the fiend worshippers, in one cry of despair and triumph.

And there they stood, the only pair, as it seemed, who

were yet hesitating on the verge of wickedness in this dark world. A basin was hollowed, naturally, in the rock. Did it contain water, reddened by the lurid light? or was it blood? or, perchance, a liquid flame? Herein did the shape of evil dip his hand and prepare to lay the mark of baptism upon their foreheads, that they might be partakers of the mystery of sin, more conscious of the secret guilt of others, both in deed and thought, than they could now be of their own. The husband cast one look at his pale wife, and Faith at him. What polluted wretches would the next glance show them to each other, shuddering alike at what they disclosed and what they saw!

"Faith! Faith!" cried the husband, "look up to heaven, and resist the wicked one."

Whether Faith obeyed he knew not. Hardly had he spoken when he found himself amid calm night and solitude, listening to a roar of the wind which died heavily away through the forest. He staggered against the rock, and felt it chill and damp; while a hanging twig, that had been all on fire, besprinkled his cheek with the coldest dew.

The next morning young Goodman Brown came slowly into the street of Salem village, staring around him like a bewildered man. The good old minister was taking a walk along the graveyard to get an appetite for breakfast and meditate his sermon, and bestowed a blessing, as he passed, on Goodman Brown. He shrank from the venerable saint as if to avoid an anathema. Old Deacon Gookin was at domestic worship, and the holy words of his prayer were heard through the open

window. “What God doth the wizard pray to?” quoth Goodman Brown. Goody Cloyse, that excellent old Christian, stood in the early sunshine at her own lattice, catechizing a little girl who had brought her a pint of morning’s milk. Goodman Brown snatched away the child as from the grasp of the fiend himself. Turning the corner by the meeting-house, he spied the head of Faith, with the pink ribbons, gazing anxiously forth, and bursting into such joy at sight of him that she skipped along the street and almost kissed her husband before the whole village. But Goodman Brown looked sternly and sadly into her face, and passed on without a greeting.

Had Goodman Brown fallen asleep in the forest and only dreamed a wild dream of a witch-meeting?

Be it so if you will; but, alas! it was a dream of evil omen for young Goodman Brown. A stern, a sad, a darkly meditative, a distrustful, if not a desperate man did he become from the night of that fearful dream. On the Sabbath day, when the congregation were singing a holy psalm, he could not listen because an anthem of sin rushed loudly upon his ear and drowned all the blessed strain. When the minister spoke from the pulpit with power and fervid eloquence, and, with his hand on the open Bible, of the sacred truths of our religion, and of saint-like lives and triumphant deaths, and of future bliss or misery unutterable, then did Goodman Brown turn pale, dreading lest the roof should thunder down upon the gray blasphemer and his hearers. Often, waking suddenly at midnight, he shrank from the bosom of Faith; and at morning or eventide, when the family

knelt down at prayer, he scowled and muttered to himself, and gazed sternly at his wife, and turned away. And when he had lived long, and was borne to his grave a hoary corpse, followed by Faith, an aged woman, and children and grandchildren, a goodly procession, besides neighbors not a few, they carved no hopeful verse upon his tombstone, for his dying hour was gloom.

Questions to Consider

1. Did the story hold you in suspense, or did you find the plot predictable? What did you think of the ending? What did you think of Hawthorne's style of writing? What is Hawthorne saying about the society in which Goodman Brown lives? What is Hawthorne saying about Goodman Brown?
2. Do you think "Young Goodman Brown" has several sub-climaxes, or are his encounters with the townspeople just part of the rising action? Explain your reasoning.
3. What conflicts does Goodman Brown encounter? Are they internal conflicts, external conflicts, or both? Explain your reasoning.
4. We know that Goodman Brown is the protagonist of the story. However, who is the antagonist? Is there more than one?
5. What is the setting of "Young Goodman Brown"?

What is the mood of "Young Goodman Brown"?

6. List some possible themes in "Young Goodman Brown." Remember, a theme is expressed in a sentence, not in one or two words. Are there any motifs in "Young Goodman Brown" to reinforce the themes you listed? What are they?

You may enter your responses to the discussion questions in the following form.

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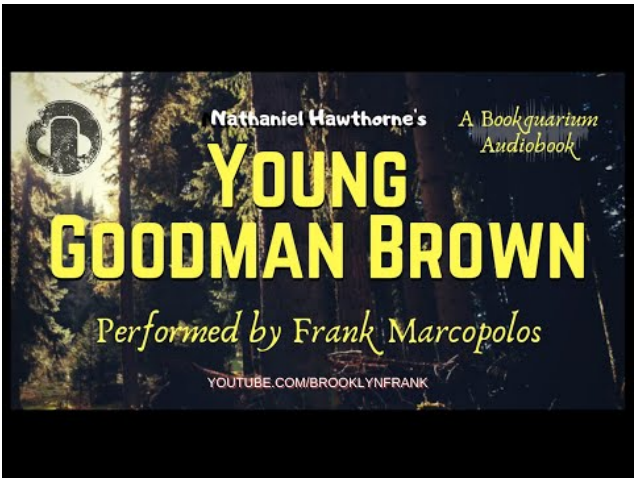
Here's an audio of "Young Goodman Brown":



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Short video of the story:

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O. Henry

O. Henry image in the Public Domain

O. Henry, whose real name was William Sydney Porter, was an American author of short stories. His works are remembered for their wit and wordplay, and often feature surprise endings, as seen in his Christmas story, "The Gift of the Magi."

O. Henry was born in North Carolina in 1862. He moved to Texas in 1882 and to Austin in 1884. He was employed in a variety of jobs throughout his life: pharmacist, draftsman, bank teller, and journalist. He wrote stories in his spare time and sent submissions to newspapers and magazines. From 1887 to 1891 he worked as a draftsman in the Texas General Land Office, drawing maps. He later worked as a teller at the First National Bank in Austin, where some discrepancies in bookkeeping led to him being accused of embezzling funds.

After a move to Houston in 1895, he was convicted of embezzlement and sent to prison. He served his sentence from 1898 to 1901, but continued writing and sending stories to publishers. He first adopted his O. Henry pseudonym with the publication of "Whistling Dick's Christmas Stocking" in December 1899. After his release from prison until his death in 1910, O. Henry lived in New York City. He wrote nearly 400 short stories in this period, including more than a year's worth of weekly stories for the *New York World Sunday Magazine*.

Here's an audio of O. Henry speaking to his readers:

https://youtu.be/oLPIOsjbfwU

O. Henry wrote "The Gift of the Magi" in 1905.

"The Gift of the Magi"

One dollar and eighty-seven cents. That was all. And sixty cents of it was in pennies. Pennies saved one and two at a time by bulldozing the grocer and the vegetable man and the butcher until one's cheeks burned with the silent imputation of parsimony that such close dealing implied. Three times Della counted it. One dollar and eighty-seven cents. And the next day would be Christmas.

There was clearly nothing to do but flop down on the shabby little couch and howl. So Della did it. Which instigates the moral reflection that life is made up of sobs, sniffles, and smiles, with sniffles predominating.

While the mistress of the home is gradually subsiding from the first stage to the second, take a look at the home. A furnished flat at $8 per week. It did not exactly beggar description, but it certainly had that word on the lookout for the mendicancy squad.

In the vestibule below was a letter-box into which no letter would go, and an electric button from which no mortal finger could coax a ring. Also appertaining thereunto was a card bearing the name "Mr. James Dillingham Young."

The "Dillingham" had been flung to the breeze during a former period of prosperity when its possessor was being paid $30 per week. Now, when the income was shrunk to $20, the letters of "Dillingham" looked blurred, as though they were thinking seriously of contracting to a modest and unassuming D. But whenever Mr. James

Dillingham Young came home and reached his flat above he was called "Jim" and greatly hugged by Mrs. James Dillingham Young, already introduced to you as Della. Which is all very good.

Della finished her cry and attended her cheeks with the powder rag. She stood by the window and looked out dully at a gray cat walking a gray fence in a gray backyard. To-morrow would be Christmas Day, and she had only $1.87 with which to buy Jim a present. She had been saving every penny she could for months, with this result. Twenty dollars a week doesn't go far. Expenses had been greater than she had calculated. They always are. Only $1.87 to buy a present for Jim. Her Jim. Many a happy hour she had spent planning for something nice for him. Something fine and rare and sterling—something just a little bit near to being worthy of the honor of being owned by Jim.

There was a pier-glass between the windows of the room. Perhaps you have seen a pier-glass in an $8 flat. A very thin and very agile person may, by observing his reflection in a rapid sequence of longitudinal strips, obtain a fairly accurate conception of his looks. Della, being slender, had mastered the art.

Suddenly she whirled from the window and stood before the glass. Her eyes were shining brilliantly, but her face had lost its color within twenty seconds. Rapidly she pulled down her hair and let it fall to its full length.

Now, there were two possessions of the James Dillingham Youngs in which they both took a mighty

pride. One was Jim's gold watch that had been his father's and his grandfather's. The other was Della's hair. Had the Queen of Sheba[13-1] lived in the flat across the airshaft, Della would have let her hair hang out the window some day to dry just to depreciate Her Majesty's jewels and gifts. Had King Solomon been the janitor, with all his treasures piled up in the basement, Jim would have pulled out his watch every time he passed, just to see him pluck at his beard from envy.

So now Della's beautiful hair fell about her, rippling and shining like a cascade of brown waters. It reached below her knee and made itself almost a garment for her. And then she did it up again nervously and quickly. Once she faltered for a minute and stood still where a tear or two splashed on the worn red carpet.

On went her old brown jacket; on went her old brown hat. With a whirl of skirts and with the brilliant sparkle still in her eyes, she fluttered out the door and down the stairs to the street.

Where she stopped the sign read: "Mme. Sofronie, Hair Goods of All Kinds." One flight up Della ran, and collected herself, panting. Madame, large, too white, chilly, hardly looked the "Sofronie."

"Will you buy my hair?" asked Della.

"I buy hair," said Madame. "Take yer hat off and let's have a sight at the looks of it."

Down rippled the brown cascade.

"Twenty dollars," said Madame, lifting the mass with a practiced hand.

"Give it to me quick," said Della.

Oh, and the next two hours tripped by on rosy wings. Forget the hashed metaphor. She was ransacking the stores for Jim's present.

She found it at last. It surely had been made for Jim and no one else. There was no other like it in any of the stores, and she had turned all of them inside out. It was a platinum fob chain, simple and chaste in design, properly proclaiming its value by substance alone and not by meretricious ornamentation—as all good things should do. It was even worthy of The Watch. As soon as she saw it she knew that it must be Jim's. It was like him. Quietness and value—the description applied to both. Twenty-one dollars they took from her for it, and she hurried home with the eighty-seven cents. With that chain on his watch Jim might be properly anxious about the time in any company. Grand as the watch was, he sometimes looked at it on the sly on account of the old leather strap he used in place of a chain.

When Della reached home her intoxication gave way a little to prudence and reason. She got out her curling irons and lighted the gas and went to work repairing the ravages made by generosity added to love. Which is always a tremendous task, dear friends—a mammoth task.

Within forty minutes her head was covered with tiny close-lying curls that made her look wonderfully like a truant schoolboy. She looked at her reflection in the mirror, long, carefully, and critically.

"If Jim doesn't kill me," she said to herself, "before he

takes a second look at me, he'll say I look like a Coney Island chorus girl. But what could I do—Oh! what could I do with a dollar and eighty-seven cents?"

At seven o'clock the coffee was made and the frying-pan was on the back of the stove hot and ready to cook the chops.

Jim was never late. Della doubled the fob chain in her hand and sat on the corner of the table near the door that he always entered. Then she heard his step on the stair away down on the first flight, and she turned white for just a moment. She had a habit of saying little silent prayers about the simplest everyday things, and now she whispered: "Please, God, make him think I am still pretty."

The door opened and Jim stepped in and closed it. He looked thin and very serious. Poor fellow, he was only twenty-two—and to be burdened with a family! He needed a new overcoat and he was without gloves.

Jim stopped inside the door, as immovable as a setter at the scent of quail. His eyes were fixed upon Della, and there was an expression in them that she could not read, and it terrified her. It was not anger, nor surprise, nor disapproval, nor horror, nor any of the sentiments that she had been prepared for. He simply stared at her fixedly with that peculiar expression on his face.

Della wriggled off the table and went for him.

"Jim, darling," she cried, "don't look at me that way. I had my hair cut off and sold it because I couldn't live through Christmas without giving you a present. It'll grow out again—you won't mind, will you? I just had to

do it. My hair grows awfully fast. Say 'Merry Christmas,' Jim, and let's be happy. You don't know what a nice—what a beautiful, nice gift I've got for you."

"You've cut off your hair?" asked Jim laboriously, as if he had not arrived at that patent fact yet, even after the hardest mental labor.

"Cut it off and sold it," said Della. "Don't you like me just as well, anyhow? I'm me without my hair, ain't I?"

Jim looked about the room curiously.

"You say your hair is gone?" he said, with an air almost of idiocy.

"You needn't look for it," said Della. "It's sold, I tell you—sold and gone, too. It's Christmas Eve, boy. Be good to me, for it went for you. Maybe the hairs of my head were numbered," she went on with a sudden serious sweetness, "but nobody could ever count my love for you. Shall I put the chops on, Jim?"

Out of his trance Jim seemed quickly to wake. He enfolded his Della. For ten seconds let us regard with discreet scrutiny some inconsequential object in the other direction. Eight dollars a week or a million a year—what is the difference? A mathematician or a wit would give you the wrong answer. The magi brought valuable gifts but that was not among them. This dark assertion will be illuminated later.

Jim drew a package from his overcoat pocket and threw it upon the table.

"Don't make any mistake, Dell," he said, "about me. I don't think there is anything in the way of a haircut or a

shave or a shampoo that could make me like my girl any less. But if you'll unwrap that package you may see why you had me going a while at first."

White fingers and nimble tore at the string and paper. And then an ecstatic scream of joy; and then, alas! a quick feminine change to hysterical tears and wails, necessitating the immediate employment of all the comforting powers of the lord of the flat.

For there lay The Combs—the set of combs, side and back, that Della had worshipped for long in a Broadway window. Beautiful combs, pure tortoise shell, with jewelled rims—just the shade to wear in the beautiful vanished hair. They were expensive combs, she knew, and her heart had simply craved and yearned over them without the least hope of possession. And now, they were hers, but the tresses that should have adorned the coveted adornments were gone.

But she hugged them to her bosom, and at length she was able to look up with dim eyes and a smile and say: "My hair grows so fast, Jim!"

And then Della leaped up like a little singed cat and cried, "Oh, Oh!"

Jim had not yet seen his beautiful present. She held it out to him eagerly upon her open palm. The dull precious metal seemed to flash with a reflection of her bright and ardent spirit.

"Isn't it a dandy, Jim? I hunted all over town to find it. You'll have to look at the time a hundred times a day now. Give me your watch. I want to see how it looks on it."

Instead of obeying, Jim tumbled down on the couch and put his hand under the back of his head and smiled.

"Dell," said he, "let's put our Christmas presents away and keep 'em a while. They're too nice to use just at present. I sold the watch to get the money to buy your combs. And now suppose you put the chops on."

The magi, as you know, were wise men—wonderfully wise men—who brought gifts to the Babe in the manger. They invented the art of giving Christmas presents. Being wise, their gifts were no doubt wise ones, possibly bearing the privilege of exchange in case of duplication. And here I have lamely related to you the uneventful chronicle of two foolish children in a flat who most unwisely sacrificed for each other the greatest treasures of their house. But in a last word to the wise of these days let it be said that of all who give gifts these two were the wisest. Of all who give and receive gifts, such as they are wisest. Everywhere they are the wisest. They are the magi.

Questions to Consider

1. Here's an Inflation calculator. Calculate the worth of $1.87 in today's currency. Is this amount important to the story?

2. How does O. Henry use irony in the story?

3. Describe the character of Della and Jim. How do you respond to the reactions of Della and Jim after receiving their gifts?

4. How does O. Henry's use of Biblical references add to the theme of the story?

You may enter your responses to the discussion questions in the following form.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://oer.pressbooks.pub/theworryfreewriter/?p=116#h5p-12

Here is a video of "The Gift of the Magi":

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James Joyce

James Joyce in the Public Domain

James Joyce was born in Dublin into a middle-class, Catholic family. Joyce's father, John, was a property tax collector whose alcoholism and consequent unreliability steadily reduced the family's income and social standing. Joyce's education became tenuous when, due to financial uncertainty, he was removed from Clongowes Wood College. He studied briefly at Christian Brothers O'Connell School before finding a place at Belvedere College, a Jesuit school. He then studied modern languages at University College Dublin where he immersed himself in literature and theater.

In 1901, Joyce and his partner, Nora Barnacle, left Ireland to live in Trieste, where Joyce taught English; they also lived in Zurich and Paris. Although he lived on the Continent, Joyce's writing consistently drew from his life in Dublin. His own intellectual and artistic growth, his school mates, roommates, acquaintances, and family members shaped and gave focus to his work, as did conflicts arising from Joyce's views on Roman Catholicism and Irish self-governance.

In 1912, he returned briefly to Ireland to see to the publication of *The Dubliners* (1914), a collection of short stories. Joyce's short stories redefined the traditional short story narrative form by "replacing" the rising-action, climax, and aftermath of Freytag's triangle with Wordsworthian spots of time, or what Joyce termed epiphanies. Its "action" reveals hidden motivations, motivations that

are deeper than the "real" situations the stories describe, motivations that lie deep in the unconscious. Joyce's realism ultimately opens up into the human psyche.

Through the financial support of Harriet Shaw Weaver (1876-1961), to whom the American writer Ezra Pound (1885-1972) introduced Joyce while in Zurich, Joyce published *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, revised from an earlier draft entitled *Portrait of the Artist*, and worked on his monumental novel *Ulysses* (1922). Despite financial strain, worsening eyesight, and the mental instability of his and Nora's daughter Lucia, Joyce continued to experiment with writing, gaining literary renown among an important circle of intellectuals and artists. Harriet Shaw Weaver and Maria McDonald Jolas (1893-1987) and Eugene Jolas (1894-1952) supported Joyce as he moved through *Ulysses* to *Finnegan's Wake* (1939).

Joyce died in Zurich from surgical complications after a perforated ulcer.

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"Araby" is one of the short stories published in *Dubliners* in 1914.

"Araby"

North Richmond Street, being blind, was a quiet street except at the hour when the Christian Brothers' School set the boys free. An uninhabited house of two storeys stood at the blind end, detached from its neighbours in a square ground. The other houses of the street, conscious of decent lives within them, gazed at one another with brown imperturbable faces.

The former tenant of our house, a priest, had died in the back drawing-room. Air, musty from having been long enclosed, hung in all the rooms, and the waste room behind the kitchen was littered with old useless papers. Among these I found a few paper-covered books, the pages of which were curled and damp: *The Abbot*, by Walter Scott, *The Devout Communicant* and *The Memoirs of Vidocq*. I liked the last best because its leaves were yellow. The wild garden behind the house contained a central apple-tree and a few straggling bushes under one of which I found the late tenant's rusty bicycle-pump. He had been a very charitable priest; in his will he had left all his money to institutions and the furniture of his house to his sister.

When the short days of winter came dusk fell before we had well eaten our dinners. When we met in the street the houses had grown sombre. The space of sky above us was the colour of ever-changing violet and towards it the lamps of the street lifted their feeble lanterns. The cold air stung us and we played till our bodies glowed. Our shouts echoed in the silent street. The career of our play brought us through the dark muddy lanes behind the houses where we ran the gauntlet of the rough tribes from the cottages, to the back doors of the dark dripping gardens where odours arose from the ashpits, to the dark odorous stables where a coachman smoothed and combed the horse or shook music from the buckled harness. When we returned to the street light from the kitchen windows had filled the areas. If my uncle was seen turning the corner we hid in the shadow until we had seen him safely housed. Or if Mangan's sister came out on the doorstep to call her brother in to his tea we watched her from our shadow peer up and down the street. We waited to see whether she would remain or go in and, if she remained, we left our shadow and walked up to Mangan's steps resignedly. She was waiting for us, her figure defined by the light from the half-opened door. Her brother always teased her before he obeyed and I stood by the railings looking at her. Her dress swung as she moved her body and the soft rope of her hair tossed from side to side.

Every morning I lay on the floor in the front parlour watching her door. The blind was pulled down to within an inch of the sash so that I could not be seen. When

she came out on the doorstep my heart leaped. I ran to the hall, seized my books and followed her. I kept her brown figure always in my eye and, when we came near the point at which our ways diverged, I quickened my pace and passed her. This happened morning after morning. I had never spoken to her, except for a few casual words, and yet her name was like a summons to all my foolish blood.

Her image accompanied me even in places the most hostile to romance. On Saturday evenings when my aunt went marketing I had to go to carry some of the parcels. We walked through the flaring streets, jostled by drunken men and bargaining women, amid the curses of labourers, the shrill litanies of shop-boys who stood on guard by the barrels of pigs' cheeks, the nasal chanting of street-singers, who sang a *come-all-you* about O'Donovan Rossa, or a ballad about the troubles in our native land. These noises converged in a single sensation of life for me: I imagined that I bore my chalice safely through a throng of foes. Her name sprang to my lips at moments in strange prayers and praises which I myself did not understand. My eyes were often full of tears (I could not tell why) and at times a flood from my heart seemed to pour itself out into my bosom. I thought little of the future. I did not know whether I would ever speak to her or not or, if I spoke to her, how I could tell her of my confused adoration. But my body was like a harp and her words and gestures were like fingers running upon the wires.

One evening I went into the back drawing-room in which the priest had died. It was a dark rainy evening

and there was no sound in the house. Through one of the broken panes I heard the rain impinge upon the earth, the fine incessant needles of water playing in the sodden beds. Some distant lamp or lighted window gleamed below me. I was thankful that I could see so little. All my senses seemed to desire to veil themselves and, feeling that I was about to slip from them, I pressed the palms of my hands together until they trembled, murmuring: "O *love! O love!*" many times.

At last she spoke to me. When she addressed the first words to me I was so confused that I did not know what to answer. She asked me was I going to *Araby*. I forgot whether I answered yes or no. It would be a splendid bazaar, she said; she would love to go.

"And why can't you?" I asked.

While she spoke she turned a silver bracelet round and round her wrist. She could not go, she said, because there would be a retreat that week in her convent. Her brother and two other boys were fighting for their caps and I was alone at the railings. She held one of the spikes, bowing her head towards me. The light from the lamp opposite our door caught the white curve of her neck, lit up her hair that rested there and, falling, lit up the hand upon the railing. It fell over one side of her dress and caught the white border of a petticoat, just visible as she stood at ease.

"It's well for you," she said.

"If I go," I said, "I will bring you something."

What innumerable follies laid waste my waking and sleeping thoughts after that evening! I wished to

annihilate the tedious intervening days. I chafed against the work of school. At night in my bedroom and by day in the classroom her image came between me and the page I strove to read. The syllables of the word *Araby* were called to me through the silence in which my soul luxuriated and cast an Eastern enchantment over me. I asked for leave to go to the bazaar on Saturday night. My aunt was surprised and hoped it was not some Freemason affair. I answered few questions in class. I watched my master's face pass from amiability to sternness; he hoped I was not beginning to idle. I could not call my wandering thoughts together. I had hardly any patience with the serious work of life which, now that it stood between me and my desire, seemed to me child's play, ugly monotonous child's play.

On Saturday morning I reminded my uncle that I wished to go to the bazaar in the evening. He was fussing at the hallstand, looking for the hat-brush, and answered me curtly:

"Yes, boy, I know."

As he was in the hall I could not go into the front parlour and lie at the window. I left the house in bad humour and walked slowly towards the school. The air was pitilessly raw and already my heart misgave me.

When I came home to dinner my uncle had not yet been home. Still it was early. I sat staring at the clock for some time and, when its ticking began to irritate me, I left the room. I mounted the staircase and gained the upper part of the house. The high cold empty gloomy rooms liberated me and I went from room to room

singing. From the front window I saw my companions playing below in the street. Their cries reached me weakened and indistinct and, leaning my forehead against the cool glass, I looked over at the dark house where she lived. I may have stood there for an hour, seeing nothing but the brown-clad figure cast by my imagination, touched discreetly by the lamplight at the curved neck, at the hand upon the railings and at the border below the dress.

When I came downstairs again I found Mrs Mercer sitting at the fire. She was an old garrulous woman, a pawnbroker's widow, who collected used stamps for some pious purpose. I had to endure the gossip of the tea-table. The meal was prolonged beyond an hour and still my uncle did not come. Mrs Mercer stood up to go: she was sorry she couldn't wait any longer, but it was after eight o'clock and she did not like to be out late as the night air was bad for her. When she had gone I began to walk up and down the room, clenching my fists. My aunt said:

"I'm afraid you may put off your bazaar for this night of Our Lord."

At nine o'clock I heard my uncle's latchkey in the halldoor. I heard him talking to himself and heard the hallstand rocking when it had received the weight of his overcoat. I could interpret these signs. When he was midway through his dinner I asked him to give me the money to go to the bazaar. He had forgotten.

"The people are in bed and after their first sleep now," he said.

I did not smile. My aunt said to him energetically:

"Can't you give him the money and let him go? You've kept him late enough as it is."

My uncle said he was very sorry he had forgotten. He said he believed in the old saying: "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." He asked me where I was going and, when I had told him a second time he asked me did I know *The Arab's Farewell to his Steed*. When I left the kitchen he was about to recite the opening lines of the piece to my aunt.

I held a florin tightly in my hand as I strode down Buckingham Street towards the station. The sight of the streets thronged with buyers and glaring with gas recalled to me the purpose of my journey. I took my seat in a third-class carriage of a deserted train. After an intolerable delay the train moved out of the station slowly. It crept onward among ruinous houses and over the twinkling river. At Westland Row Station a crowd of people pressed to the carriage doors; but the porters moved them back, saying that it was a special train for the bazaar. I remained alone in the bare carriage. In a few minutes the train drew up beside an improvised wooden platform. I passed out on to the road and saw by the lighted dial of a clock that it was ten minutes to ten. In front of me was a large building which displayed the magical name.

I could not find any sixpenny entrance and, fearing that the bazaar would be closed, I passed in quickly through a turnstile, handing a shilling to a weary-looking man. I found myself in a big hall girdled at half

its height by a gallery. Nearly all the stalls were closed and the greater part of the hall was in darkness. I recognised a silence like that which pervades a church after a service. I walked into the centre of the bazaar timidly. A few people were gathered about the stalls which were still open. Before a curtain, over which the words *Café Chantant* were written in coloured lamps, two men were counting money on a salver. I listened to the fall of the coins.

Remembering with difficulty why I had come I went over to one of the stalls and examined porcelain vases and flowered tea-sets. At the door of the stall a young lady was talking and laughing with two young gentlemen. I remarked their English accents and listened vaguely to their conversation.

"O, I never said such a thing!"

"O, but you did!"

"O, but I didn't!"

"Didn't she say that?"

"Yes. I heard her."

"O, there's a ... fib!"

Observing me the young lady came over and asked me did I wish to buy anything. The tone of her voice was not encouraging; she seemed to have spoken to me out of a sense of duty. I looked humbly at the great jars that stood like eastern guards at either side of the dark entrance to the stall and murmured:

"No, thank you."

The young lady changed the position of one of the vases and went back to the two young men. They began to talk of the same subject. Once or twice the young lady glanced at me over her shoulder.

I lingered before her stall, though I knew my stay was useless, to make my interest in her wares seem the more real. Then I turned away slowly and walked down the middle of the bazaar. I allowed the two pennies to fall against the sixpence in my pocket. I heard a voice call from one end of the gallery that the light was out. The upper part of the hall was now completely dark.

Gazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger.

Questions to Consider

1. What are the epiphanies in "Araby"? What psychological insights, if any, to the protagonist do their epiphanies provide?
2. What realistic elements, or concrete particularities, if any, do "Araby" possess? How do these elements shape the narrative?
3. How does Joyce use symbolism in "Araby" What is the effect of this symbolism on the narrative?
4. How does Joyce use point of view in "Araby" ?

What's the effect of this use of point of view on the narrative?

You may enter your responses to the discussion questions in the following form.

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Audio version of "Araby":

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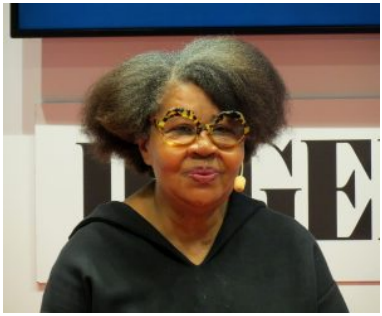
Jamaica Kincaid (1949-)



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Jamaica Kincaid, whose original name is Elaine Potter Richardson, was born in Antigua in 1949. She is currently Professor of African and African-American Studies at Harvard University. She grew up in Antigua in poverty, and she had a troubled relationship with her mother, whom she believed neglected her in favor of her brothers. She has said that this relationship shaped her as a writer. As a teenager, she moved to New York city, where she began her career as a writer in her twenties publishing short stories in teen magazines but eventually publishing short fiction in *The Village Voice*, *The Paris Review*, and *The New Yorker*. While she has no college degree, Kincaid wrote for *The New Yorker* for nearly 20 years.

An interview with Jamaica Kincaid:

https://youtube.com/watch?v=oPgjWIYKm5w%3Ffeature%3Doembed%26rel%3D0

“Girl”

Kincaid’s work is often semi-autobiographical; she explores themes of race and gender, particularly in a neo-colonial setting. “Girl” was originally published in the *New Yorker* magazine in 1978. Written as a dispute between a mother and a daughter, it is a powerful illustration of the limits of a young woman’s life in the Caribbean culture of the time.

“Girl” was published in *The New Yorker* in 1978.

“Girl”

Questions to Consider

1. How does the title of the story influence the meaning? How might changing the title impact the story?
2. Who is the speaker in the story? How would a different speaker change the meaning of the story?
3. Who is the speaker talking to? How might a different audience impact the story?
4. In what ways might a modern audience relate to this story?

You may enter your responses to the discussion questions in the following form.

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Jamaica Kincaid reads "Girl":

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Guy de Maupassant

Guy de Maupassant Public Domain

Henri René Albert Guy de Maupassant (August 5, 1850 – July 6, 1893) was a popular nineteenth-century French writer. He is one of the fathers of the modern short story and its leading practicioner in France. His war stories taken from the Franco-Prussian War of the 1870s denote the futility of war and the innocent civilians who get crushed in it. However, like Anton Chekhov in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Russia, his stories cover the panorama of French life at the end of the nineteenth century, including different social classes and life along the Seine. His short stories are characterized by their economy of style and the efficient way in which the various threads are neatly resolved. He also wrote six novels.

In 1878 he was transferred to the Ministry of Public Instruction, becoming a contributing editor to several leading newspapers such as *Le Figaro*, *Gil Blas*, *Le Gaulois and* l'Echo de Paris. *He devoted his spare time to writing novels and short stories.*

In 1880 he published his first masterpiece, "*Boule de Suif*," which met with an instant and tremendous success. Flaubert characterized it as "a masterpiece that will endure." This was Maupassant's first piece of short fiction set during the Franco-Prussian War, and was followed by short stories such as "*Deux Amis*," "Mother Savage," and "Mademoiselle Fifi."

The decade from 1880 to 1891 was the most fertile period of

Maupassant's life. Made famous by his first short story, he worked methodically and produced two or sometimes four volumes annually. He combined talent and practical business sense, which made him wealthy.

In 1881 he published his first volume of short stories under the title of *La Maison Tellier*; it reached its twelfth edition within two years; in 1883 he finished his first novel, *Une Vie* (translated into English as *A Woman's Life*), 25,000 copies of which were sold in less than a year. In his novels, he concentrated all his observations scattered in his short stories. His second novel *Bel-Ami*, which came out in 1885, had thirty-seven printings in four months.

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"The Diamond Necklace" was published in France in 1884.

"The Diamond Necklace"

The girl was one of those pretty and charming young creatures who sometimes are born, as if by a slip of fate, into a family of clerks. She had no dowry, no expectations, no way of being known, understood, loved, married by any rich and distinguished man; so she let herself be married to a little clerk of the Ministry of Public Instruction.

She dressed plainly because she could not dress well, but she was unhappy as if she had really fallen from a higher station; since with women there is neither caste nor rank, for beauty, grace and charm take the place of family and birth. Natural ingenuity, instinct for what is elegant, a supple mind are their sole hierarchy, and often make of women of the people the equals of the very greatest ladies.

Mathilde suffered ceaselessly, feeling herself born to enjoy all delicacies and all luxuries. She was distressed at the poverty of her dwelling, at the bareness of the walls, at the shabby chairs, the ugliness of the curtains. All those things, of which another woman of her rank would never even have been conscious, tortured her and made her angry. The sight of the little Breton peasant who did her humble housework aroused in her despairing regrets and bewildering dreams. She thought of silent antechambers hung with Oriental tapestry, illumined by tall bronze candelabra, and of two great footmen in knee breeches who sleep in the big armchairs, made drowsy by the oppressive heat of the stove. She thought of long reception halls hung with

ancient silk, of the dainty cabinets containing priceless curiosities and of the little coquettish perfumed reception rooms made for chatting at five o'clock with intimate friends, with men famous and sought after, whom all women envy and whose attention they all desire.

When she sat down to dinner, before the round table covered with a tablecloth in use three days, opposite her husband, who uncovered the soup tureen and declared with a delighted air, "Ah, the good soup! I don't know anything better than that," she thought of dainty dinners, of shining silverware, of tapestry that peopled the walls with ancient personages and with strange birds flying in the midst of a fairy forest; and she thought of delicious dishes served on marvellous plates and of the whispered gallantries to which you listen with a sphinxlike smile while you are eating the pink meat of a trout or the wings of a quail.

She had no gowns, no jewels, nothing. And she loved nothing but that. She felt made for that. She would have liked so much to please, to be envied, to be charming, to be sought after.

She had a friend, a former schoolmate at the convent, who was rich, and whom she did not like to go to see any more because she felt so sad when she came home.

But one evening her husband reached home with a triumphant air and holding a large envelope in his hand.

"There," said he, "there is something for you."

She tore the paper quickly and drew out a printed card which bore these words:

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The Minister of Public Instruction and Madame Georges
request the honor of M. and Madame Loisel's company at t
the Ministry on Monday evening, January 18th.
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Instead of being delighted, as her husband had hoped, she threw the invitation on the table crossly, muttering:

“What do you wish me to do with that?”

“Why, my dear, I thought you would be glad. You never go out, and this is such a fine opportunity. I had great trouble to get it. Every one wants to go; it is very select, and they are not giving many invitations to clerks. The whole official world will be there.”

She looked at him with an irritated glance and said impatiently:

“And what do you wish me to put on my back?”

He had not thought of that. He stammered:

“Why, the gown you go to the theatre in. It looks very well to me.”

He stopped, distracted, seeing that his wife was weeping. Two great tears ran slowly from the corners of her eyes toward the corners of her mouth.

“What’s the matter? What’s the matter?” he answered.

By a violent effort she conquered her grief and replied in a calm voice, while she wiped her wet cheeks:

“Nothing. Only I have no gown, and, therefore, I can’t go to this ball. Give your card to some colleague whose wife is better equipped than I am.”

He was in despair. He resumed:

"Come, let us see, Mathilde. How much would it cost, a suitable gown, which you could use on other occasions—something very simple?"

She reflected several seconds, making her calculations and wondering also what sum she could ask without drawing on herself an immediate refusal and a frightened exclamation from the economical clerk.

Finally she replied hesitating:

"I don't know exactly, but I think I could manage it with four hundred francs."

He grew a little pale, because he was laying aside just that amount to buy a gun and treat himself to a little shooting next summer on the plain of Nanterre, with several friends who went to shoot larks there of a Sunday.

But he said:

"Very well. I will give you four hundred francs. And try to have a pretty gown."

The day of the ball drew near and Madame Loisel seemed sad, uneasy, anxious. Her frock was ready, however. Her husband said to her one evening:

"What is the matter? Come, you have seemed very queer these last three days."

And she answered:

"It annoys me not to have a single piece of jewelry, not a single ornament, nothing to put on. I shall look poverty-stricken. I would almost rather not go at all."

"You might wear natural flowers," said her husband.

"They're very stylish at this time of year. For ten francs you can get two or three magnificent roses."

She was not convinced.

"No; there's nothing more humiliating than to look poor among other women who are rich."

"How stupid you are!" her husband cried. "Go look up your friend, Madame Forestier, and ask her to lend you some jewels. You're intimate enough with her to do that."

She uttered a cry of joy:

"True! I never thought of it."

The next day she went to her friend and told her of her distress.

Madame Forestier went to a wardrobe with a mirror, took out a large jewel box, brought it back, opened it and said to Madame Loisel:

"Choose, my dear."

She saw first some bracelets, then a pearl necklace, then a Venetian gold cross set with precious stones, of admirable workmanship. She tried on the ornaments before the mirror, hesitated and could not make up her mind to part with them, to give them back. She kept asking:

"Haven't you any more?"

"Why, yes. Look further; I don't know what you like."

Suddenly she discovered, in a black satin box, a superb diamond necklace, and her heart throbbed with an immoderate desire. Her hands trembled as she took

it. She fastened it round her throat, outside her high-necked waist, and was lost in ecstasy at her reflection in the mirror.

Then she asked, hesitating, filled with anxious doubt:

"Will you lend me this, only this?"

"Why, yes, certainly."

She threw her arms round her friend's neck, kissed her passionately, then fled with her treasure.

The night of the ball arrived. Madame Loisel was a great success. She was prettier than any other woman present, elegant, graceful, smiling and wild with joy. All the men looked at her, asked her name, sought to be introduced. All the attaches of the Cabinet wished to waltz with her. She was remarked by the minister himself.

She danced with rapture, with passion, intoxicated by pleasure, forgetting all in the triumph of her beauty, in the glory of her success, in a sort of cloud of happiness comprised of all this homage, admiration, these awakened desires and of that sense of triumph which is so sweet to woman's heart.

She left the ball about four o'clock in the morning. Her husband had been sleeping since midnight in a little deserted anteroom with three other gentlemen whose wives were enjoying the ball.

He threw over her shoulders the wraps he had brought, the modest wraps of common life, the poverty of which contrasted with the elegance of the ball dress. She felt this and wished to escape so as not to be

remarked by the other women, who were enveloping themselves in costly furs.

Loisel held her back, saying: “Wait a bit. You will catch cold outside. I will call a cab.”

But she did not listen to him and rapidly descended the stairs. When they reached the street they could not find a carriage and began to look for one, shouting after the cabmen passing at a distance.

They went toward the Seine in despair, shivering with cold. At last they found on the quay one of those ancient night cabs which, as though they were ashamed to show their shabbiness during the day, are never seen round Paris until after dark.

It took them to their dwelling in the Rue des Martyrs, and sadly they mounted the stairs to their flat. All was ended for her. As to him, he reflected that he must be at the ministry at ten o’clock that morning.

She removed her wraps before the glass so as to see herself once more in all her glory. But suddenly she uttered a cry. She no longer had the necklace around her neck!

“What is the matter with you?” demanded her husband, already half undressed.

She turned distractedly toward him.

“I have—I have—I’ve lost Madame Forestier’s necklace,” she cried.

He stood up, bewildered.

“What!—how? Impossible!”

They looked among the folds of her skirt, of her cloak, in her pockets, everywhere, but did not find it.

"You're sure you had it on when you left the ball?" he asked.

"Yes, I felt it in the vestibule of the minister's house."

"But if you had lost it in the street we should have heard it fall. It must be in the cab."

"Yes, probably. Did you take his number?"

"No. And you—didn't you notice it?"

"No."

They looked, thunderstruck, at each other. At last Loisel put on his clothes.

"I shall go back on foot," said he, "over the whole route, to see whether I can find it."

He went out. She sat waiting on a chair in her ball dress, without strength to go to bed, overwhelmed, without any fire, without a thought.

Her husband returned about seven o'clock. He had found nothing.

He went to police headquarters, to the newspaper offices to offer a reward; he went to the cab companies—everywhere, in fact, whither he was urged by the least spark of hope.

She waited all day, in the same condition of mad fear before this terrible calamity.

Loisel returned at night with a hollow, pale face. He had discovered nothing.

"You must write to your friend," said he, "that you have broken the clasp of her necklace and that you are having it mended. That will give us time to turn round."

She wrote at his dictation.

At the end of a week they had lost all hope. Loisel, who had aged five years, declared:

"We must consider how to replace that ornament."

The next day they took the box that had contained it and went to the jeweler whose name was found within. He consulted his books.

"It was not I, madame, who sold that necklace; I must simply have furnished the case."

Then they went from jeweler to jeweler, searching for a necklace like the other, trying to recall it, both sick with chagrin and grief.

They found, in a shop at the Palais Royal, a string of diamonds that seemed to them exactly like the one they had lost. It was worth forty thousand francs. They could have it for thirty-six.

So they begged the jeweler not to sell it for three days yet. And they made a bargain that he should buy it back for thirty-four thousand francs, in case they should find the lost necklace before the end of February.

Loisel possessed eighteen thousand francs which his father had left him. He would borrow the rest.

He did borrow, asking a thousand francs of one, five hundred of another, five louis here, three louis there. He gave notes, took up ruinous obligations, dealt with

usurers and all the race of lenders. He compromised all the rest of his life, risked signing a note without even knowing whether he could meet it; and, frightened by the trouble yet to come, by the black misery that was about to fall upon him, by the prospect of all the physical privations and moral tortures that he was to suffer, he went to get the new necklace, laying upon the jeweler's counter thirty-six thousand francs.

When Madame Loisel took back the necklace Madame Forestier said to her with a chilly manner:

"You should have returned it sooner; I might have needed it."

She did not open the case, as her friend had so much feared. If she had detected the substitution, what would she have thought, what would she have said? Would she not have taken Madame Loisel for a thief?

Thereafter Madame Loisel knew the horrible existence of the needy. She bore her part, however, with sudden heroism. That dreadful debt must be paid. She would pay it. They dismissed their servant; they changed their lodgings; they rented a garret under the roof.

She came to know what heavy housework meant and the odious cares of the kitchen. She washed the dishes, using her dainty fingers and rosy nails on greasy pots and pans. She washed the soiled linen, the shirts and the dishcloths, which she dried upon a line; she carried the slops down to the street every morning and carried up the water, stopping for breath at every landing. And dressed like a woman of the people, she went to the

fruiterer, the grocer, the butcher, a basket on her arm, bargaining, meeting with impertinence, defending her miserable money, sou by sou.

Every month they had to meet some notes, renew others, obtain more time.

Her husband worked evenings, making up a tradesman's accounts, and late at night he often copied manuscript for five sous a page.

This life lasted ten years.

At the end of ten years they had paid everything, everything, with the rates of usury and the accumulations of the compound interest.

Madame Loisel looked old now. She had become the woman of impoverished households—strong and hard and rough. With frowsy hair, skirts askew and red hands, she talked loud while washing the floor with great swishes of water. But sometimes, when her husband was at the office, she sat down near the window and she thought of that gay evening of long ago, of that ball where she had been so beautiful and so admired.

What would have happened if she had not lost that necklace? Who knows? who knows? How strange and changeful is life! How small a thing is needed to make or ruin us!

But one Sunday, having gone to take a walk in the Champs Elysees to refresh herself after the labors of the week, she suddenly perceived a woman who was leading a child. It was Madame Forestier, still young, still beautiful, still charming.

Madame Loisel felt moved. Should she speak to her? Yes, certainly. And now that she had paid, she would tell her all about it. Why not?

She went up.

"Good-day, Jeanne."

The other, astonished to be familiarly addressed by this plain good-wife, did not recognize her at all and stammered:

"But—madame!—I do not know—You must have mistaken."

"No. I am Mathilde Loisel."

Her friend uttered a cry.

"Oh, my poor Mathilde! How you are changed!"

"Yes, I have had a pretty hard life, since I last saw you, and great poverty—and that because of you!"

"Of me! How so?"

"Do you remember that diamond necklace you lent me to wear at the ministerial ball?"

"Yes. Well?"

"Well, I lost it."

"What do you mean? You brought it back."

"I brought you back another exactly like it. And it has taken us ten years to pay for it. You can understand that it was not easy for us, for us who had nothing. At last it is ended, and I am very glad."

Madame Forestier had stopped.

"You say that you bought a necklace of diamonds to replace mine?"

"Yes. You never noticed it, then! They were very similar."

And she smiled with a joy that was at once proud and ingenuous.

Madame Forestier, deeply moved, took her hands.

"Oh, my poor Mathilde! Why, my necklace was paste! It was worth at most only five hundred francs!"

Questions to Consider

1. How does the title influence the reading of the story?
2. Describe the setting of the story. How does the setting impact the story?
3. What role do the minor characters play in this story?
4. Maupassant is known for his surprise endings. Was the ending of this story a surprise? How so?

You may enter your responses to the discussion questions in the following form.

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Video version of “The Diamond Necklace”:

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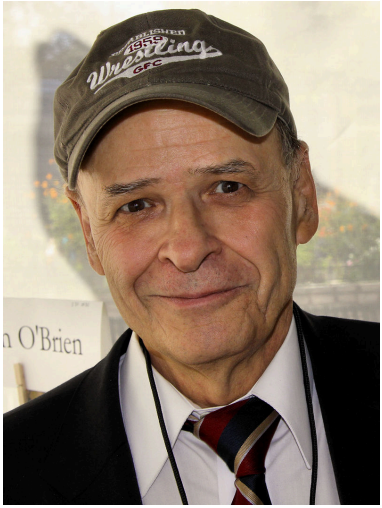
Tim O'Brien



Tim O'Brien licensed CC BY SA

Tim O'Brien grew up in small-town Minnesota and describes himself as a dreamer, not big enough to compete in sports, who made good grades and loved magic tricks. In 1968, he was drafted into the Army's 46th Infantry and sent to Vietnam. Though politically he was against the war, O'Brien served as a foot soldier in the Quang Ngai province from 1969 until 1970, when he was hit by shrapnel from a hand grenade, earning the Purple Heart and a ticket home.

The Things They Carried was published in 1990, twenty years after Tim O'Brien returned from his tour of duty in Vietnam. By most estimates, nearly 9 million men served in the military between 1964 and 1975. Of that number, approximately 3.5 million men served in the Vietnam theatre of operations. The draft called more than 2 million men for military service during the Vietnam era. It has also been credited with "encouraging" many volunteers to join the armed services rather than risk being drafted into combat.

Mostly narrated by a first-person narrator whose name is the same as the author's, the similarities between events that take place in O'Brien's writing and his life are evident. Yet, however cleverly

The Things They Carried incorporates elements of memoir, it remains a work of fiction
because the author invented and embellished the stories within its pages. O'Brien has explained in many interviews that he sees little correlation between "truth" in literature and what actually happened. Instead, O'Brien creates stories that lead readers who have not experienced the horrors of war to an understanding of its emotional and physical toll.

O'Brien telling a true war story:

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The short story, "The Things They Carried," is the first chapter of the book. It was first published in 1986 in *Esquire Magazine*.

- "The Things They Carried" (1986) (This link takes you directly to the ebook at the YC Library. Read Chapter 1.) This original text of the short story alone is also available online at *Esquire* with a subscription.
- "The People We Marry" (1992)

Questions to Consider

1. Make a list of items that the soldiers in the story carried. Which, if any, of the items is specific to the time period of the Vietnam War? Which items are timeless? Why might Tim O'Brien choose to give each man specific items in addition to the typical soldier's gear? What do the items tell us about each solder's duties and personality? What do we learn about their hopes and desires?
2. How does O'Brien's use of figurative language enhance the reader's experience?
3. How does O'Brien use symbols?
4. Discuss the nature of fiction vs. non-fiction. How does this story blur the lines between the two?
5. If you read "The People We Marry," compare the two pieces.

You may enter your responses to the discussion questions in the following form.

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Tim O'Brien speaks about "The Things They Carried":

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Flannery O'Connor (1925-1964)

Flannery O'Connor licensed CC BY SA.

Mary Flannery O'Connor (March 25, 1925 – August 3, 1964) was an American author, born in Savannah, Georgia. She is generally seen as an example of a style of writing known as "Southern Gothic." Southern Gothic is a subgenre of the Gothic writing style, unique to American literature. Like its parent genre, it relies on supernatural, ironic, or unusual events to guide the plot. Unlike its predecessor, it uses these tools not for the sake of suspense, but to explore social issues and reveal the cultural character of the American South.

O'Connor's writing was deeply informed by the sacramental, and by the Thomistic notion that the created world is charged with God. Yet she would not write apologetic fiction of the kind prevalent in the Catholic literature of the time, explaining that a writer's meaning must be evident in his or her fiction without didacticism. She wrote ironic, subtly allegorical fiction about deceptively backward Southern characters, usually fundamentalist Protestants, who undergo transformations of character that, in O'Connor's view, brought them closer to the Catholic mind. The transformation is often accomplished through pain and violence. However grotesque the setting, she tried to portray her characters as they might be touched by divine grace—not in the Protestant sense of total absolution of sins, but rather as an incremental growth of character.

An important voice in American literature, O'Connor wrote two novels and 31 short stories, as well as a number of reviews and

commentaries. Her texts often take place in the South and revolve around morally flawed characters, while the issue of race looms in the background. A trademark of hers is unsubtle foreshadowing, giving a reader an idea of what will happen far before it happens. Finally, she brands each work with a disturbing and ironic conclusion.

"A Good Man is Hard to Find" was first published in 1953 in the anthology *The Avon Book of Modern Writing*. Because of its publication in many anthologies, "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" became one of O'Connor's best known works.

"A Good Man is Hard to Find" See also alternative source.

Questions to Consider

1. Describe the character of the grandmother. Is she a likeable character? Explain. How did you feel when The Misfit killed her? Why?

2. How would you characterize the other members of the family? How does imagery play into the author's characterizations?

3. How does O'Connor use foreshadowing?

4. How does the author explore the meaning of the word "good"?

You may enter your responses to the discussion questions in the following form.

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Flannery O'Connor Reads "A Good Man is Hard to Find":

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Katherine Anne Porter (1890-1980)

Katherine Anne Porter Fair Use

Katherine Porter was an American essayist, short story writer, and journalist, whose only novel was *Ship of Fools* (1962), an allegorical story set on a passenger ship. Before the work was finished, Porter spent twenty years with it. Porter is also remembered as one of America's best short-story writers.

Porter was born Callie Russell Porter in Indian Creek, Texas, but she grew up in Hays County, Texas. Part of her childhood was spent also in Louisiana. She was the fourth child of Harrison Boone Porter and Mary Alice Jones Porter, who died when Katherine Anne was two. Later she blamed her father for the death of her mother, who had given birth to five children in eight years.

Porter's paternal grandmother, Catharine Ann Skaggs Porter, who raised Katherine's father, was a stern disciplinarian. However, Catharine's reminiscences of the Civil War and tales of her family's past were Porter's first introduction to the art of storytelling. She died when Porter was eleven, but her strong character provided a model for grandmothers in her stories.

Porter was educated in convent schools though her formal education was rather irregular. At the age of sixteen she ran away from a New Orleans convent and married the first of her four husbands, John Koontz. This marriage lasted nine years; religion was the first of many differences. After their divorce, Porter contracted tuberculosis and during her recovery she decided to

became a writer. Her study *Outline of Mexican Popular Arts and Crafts* came out in 1922.

Porter's first collection of short stories was *Flowering Judas*. The limited edition of 600 copies appeared in 1930. However, this work established her reputation as a highly original writer and earned her a Guggenheim grant. The collection was enlarged in 1935.

Other works include *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* (1939), *The Learning Tower* (1944), essay collections *The Days Before* (1952) and A *Defense Circle* (1954), and her *Collected Stories* (1965), which was awarded in 1966 both the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award. Her only novel, *Ship of Fools*, which came out when Porter was 72, made her rich and famous.

Here is an interview with Katherine Anne Porter.

A video of Katherine Anne Porter:

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Read “Flowering Judas” HERE.

Questions to Consider

1.) Discuss the character of Laura. What do we know about her character from the details revealed in the story? Why do you think she makes the decisions she does? How do you feel about her?

2.) Talk about Braggioni. How is he important to the story? What does he represent? How would you describe the relationship between Braggioni and Laura?

3.) Give some examples of imagery in this story. How does the imagery contribute to the theme of the story?

You may enter your responses to the discussion questions in the following form.

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Radio dramatization of “Flowering Judas” with Katherine Anne Porter:

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Amy Tan

Amy Tan in the Public Domain

Amy Ruth Tan (born February 19, 1952) is an American author known for the novel *The Joy Luck Club*, which was adapted into the film *The Joy Luck Club* in 1993 by director Wayne Wang.

Tan was born in Oakland, California. She is the second of three children born to Chinese immigrants John and Daisy Tan. Tan attended Marian A. Peterson High School in Sunnyvale for one year. When she was fifteen years old, her father and older brother Peter both died of brain tumors within six months of each other.

Tan's mother subsequently moved Amy and her younger brother, John Jr., to Switzerland, where Amy finished high school. During this period, Amy learned about her mother's previous marriage to another man in China, of their four children (a son who died as a toddler and three daughters), and how her mother left these children behind in Shanghai. This incident was the basis for Tan's first novel *The Joy Luck Club*. In 1987, Amy traveled with Daisy to China. There, Amy met her three half-sisters.

Tan had a difficult relationship with her mother, who wanted Tan to be independent and stressed that Tan needed to make sure she was self-sufficient. Tan's mother died in 1999.

Tan later received bachelor's and master's degrees in English and linguistics from San Jose State University. She took doctoral courses in linguistics at University of California, Santa Cruz, and University of California, Berkeley.

Tan has written several other novels, including *The Kitchen God's*

Wife, *The Hundred Secret Senses*, *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, *Saving Fish from Drowning*, and *The Valley of Amazement*. Tan's latest book is a memoir entitled *Where The Past Begins: A Writer's Memoir* (2017). In addition to these, Tan has written two children's books: *The Moon Lady* (1992) and *Sagwa, the Chinese Siamese Cat* (1994), which was turned into an animated series that aired on PBS.

Learn more about Amy Tan on her website.

Watch this interview with Amy Tan:

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"Two Kinds" is an excerpt from chapter 8 of Tan's novel *The Joy Luck Club*, published in 1989.

"Two Kinds" (online text)

Joy Luck Club is available to YC students via both print and ebook in the library catalog: *Joy Luck Club*

Questions for Consideration

1. What does the title of the story refer to?
2. How does the mother's use of language impact the story?
3. Discuss the mother in this story. How have her life experiences shaped the person that she is and the way in which she relates to her daughter?
4. Describe the character of the daughter. What moments in the text best highlight her personality and desires?
5. Does the relationship between the mother and daughter reflect common values shared among all cultures? Explain.
6. What is the significance of the two pieces the daughter plays on the piano, "Pleading Child" and "Perfectly Contented"?

You may enter your responses to the discussion questions in the following form.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://oer.pressbooks.pub/theworryfreewriter/?p=116#h5p-19

Here is an audio version of "Two Kinds":

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The two songs from "Two Kinds":

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLK2NuJ8mQgRVjRkKByeESO2RVG_ZJQAOn

Watch this scene from "Two Kinds" from *The Joy Luck Club*:

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Alice Walker

Alice Walker licensed CC BY SA.

Alice Malsenior Walker, born February 9, 1944, is an American author and self-declared feminist and womanist—the latter a term she herself coined to make special distinction for the experiences of women of color. She has written at length on issues of race and gender, and is most famous for the critically acclaimed novel *The Color Purple*, for which she won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction.

Alice Walker was born in Eatonton, Georgia, the 8th child in her family. After high school, Walker went to Spelman College in Atlanta on full scholarship in 1961 and later transferred to Sarah Lawrence College near New York City, graduating in 1965.

Alice Walker's first book of poetry was written while she was still a senior at Sarah Lawrence, however she took a brief sabbatical from writing when she was in Mississippi working in the Civil Rights Movement, after which she accepted a position at Wellesley College where she taught a course on African-American women's literature in 1972. Walker resumed her writing career when she joined *Ms.* magazine as an editor before moving to northern California in the late 1970s. An article she published in 1975 was largely responsible for the renewal of interest in the work of Zora Neale Hurston, who was an important source of inspiration for Walker's writing and subject matter. In 1973, Walker and fellow Hurston scholar Charlotte D. Hunt discovered Hurston's unmarked grave in Ft. Pierce, Florida.

In addition to her collected short stories and poetry, Walker's first novel, *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, was published in 1970. In 1976, Walker's second novel, *Meridian*, was published. The novel dealt with activist workers in the South during the civil rights

movement, and closely paralleled some of Walker's own experiences.

"Everyday Use" was published in *Harper's Magazine* in April 1973. Please watch this interview with Walker on the story:

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"Everyday Use"

Questions for Consideration

1.) Discuss the narrator in this story. Who is the narrator? What kind of person is she? How does she seem to feel about Dee? About Maggie?

2.) What does the narrator's language and grammatical usage tell us about her?

3.) How does the narrator prepare the reader for Dee before she arrives?

4.) Describe Dee's character. What kind of person is she? What do Dee's actions (taking photos, kissing her mother on the forehead, assuming African dress, etc) tell readers about her? How would you describe her attitude toward her race? How do Dee's reactions to her mother's home impact how readers see her?

5.) Discuss the relationship between Maggie and Dee.

6.) Why do you think Mrs. Johnson decide to stand up to Dee and not allow her to take the quilts at the end of the story?

7.) Could this story just as well have been about a mother and her daughters of another race? Does anything distinguish Dee's relations with her mother and Maggie as especially black? If not, is that a strength of the story, or a weakness?

You may enter your responses to the discussion questions in the following form.

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Watch a film based on “Everyday Use”:

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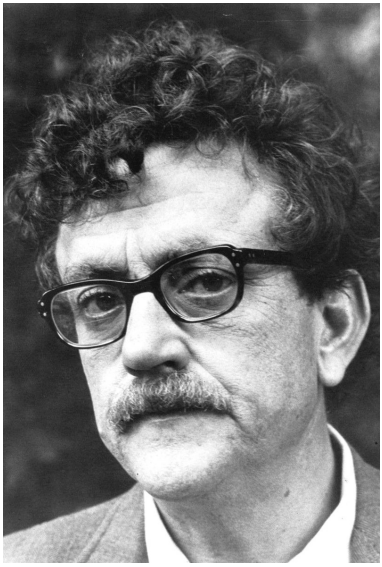
Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. (1922-2007)



Kurt Vonnegut Public Domain

Kurt Vonnegut Jr. was an American writer. In a career spanning over 50 years, Vonnegut published fourteen novels, three short story collections, five plays, and five works of nonfiction, with further collections being published after his death. He is most famous for his darkly satirical, bestselling novel *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969).

Born and raised in Indianapolis, Indiana, Vonnegut attended Cornell University but dropped out in January 1943 and enlisted in the United States Army. As part of his training, he studied mechanical engineering at Carnegie Institute of Technology (now Carnegie Mellon University) and the University of Tennessee. He was then deployed to Europe to fight in World War II and was captured by the Germans during the Battle of the Bulge. He was interned in Dresden

and survived the Allied bombing of the city by taking refuge in a meat locker of the slaughterhouse where he was imprisoned. After the war, Vonnegut married Jane Marie Cox, with whom he had three children. He later adopted his sister's sons after she died of cancer and her husband was killed in a train accident.

Vonnegut published his first novel, *Player Piano*, in 1952. The novel was reviewed positively but was not commercially successful at the time. In the nearly 20 years that followed, Vonnegut published several novels that were well regarded, two of which (*The Sirens of Titan* [1959] and *Cat's Cradle* [1963]) were nominated for the Hugo Award for best novel. He published a short story collection titled *Welcome to the Monkey House* in 1968. Vonnegut's breakthrough was his commercially and critically successful sixth novel, *Slaughterhouse-Five*. The book's anti-war sentiment resonated with its readers amidst the ongoing Vietnam War and its reviews were generally positive. After its release, *Slaughterhouse-Five* went to the top of *The New York Times* Best Seller list, thrusting Vonnegut into fame. He was invited to give speeches, lectures and commencement addresses around the country and received many awards and honors.

Later in his career, Vonnegut published several autobiographical essays and short-story collections, including *Fates Worse Than Death* (1991), and *A Man Without a Country* (2005). After his death, he was hailed as a black-humor commentator on the society in which he lived and as one of the most important contemporary writers. Vonnegut's son Mark published a compilation of his father's unpublished compositions, titled *Armageddon in Retrospect*. In 2017, Seven Stories Press published *Complete Stories*, a collection of Vonnegut's short fiction including five previously unpublished stories. *Complete Stories* was collected and introduced by Vonnegut friends and scholars Jerome Klinkowitz and Dan Wakefield. Numerous scholarly works have examined Vonnegut's writing and humor.

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Vonnegut's short story, "Harrison Bergeron," was first published in 1961.

"Harrison Bergeron"

Questions to consider

1. What is the definition of equality in the story? How does it align with our culture's concept of equality? Yours?
2. Why do you think other people have not rebelled against

the system? Should they? Is the system moral?

3. Discuss the characters in the story. How does the author develop the characters?

You may enter your responses to the discussion questions in the following form.

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Audio Version with Video Clips from film 2081:
https://youtu.be/jfYHXL4p8GA

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47. Writing About Short Fiction

DR. KAREN PALMER

Analysis means to break something down in order to better understand how it works. To analyze a literary work is to pull it apart and look at its discrete components to see how those components contribute to the meaning and/or effect of the whole. Thus, a literary analysis argument considers what has been learned in analyzing a work (What do the parts look like and how do they function?) and forwards a particular *perspective* on their contribution to the whole (In light of the author's use of diction, for example, what meaning does the novel, as a whole, yield?).

When writing a critical theory paper, your goal is to bring out a deeper meaning in a text through the application of a critical theory. For instance, you might show how an author illustrates the status of women in a particular time period (as in "The Story of an Hour") or how a short story's focus on money or status highlights a disparity between the classes ("The Necklace").

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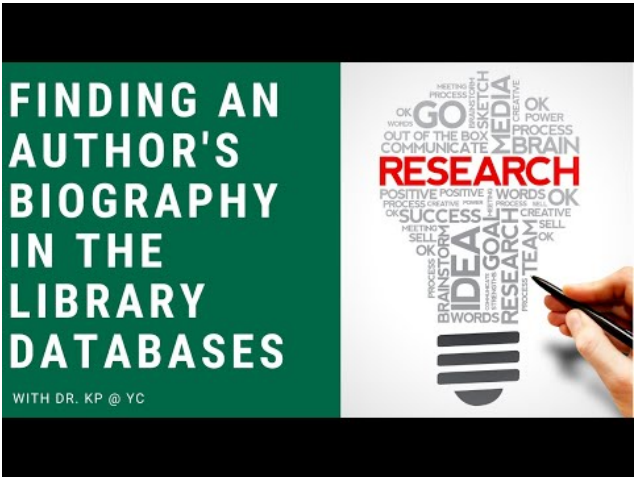
Your own findings from your analysis of the primary text should be a priority in your interpretation of the work. Analytical skills are invaluable as you explore any subject, investigating the subject by breaking it down and looking closely at how it functions. Finding patterns in your observations, then, helps you to interpret your analysis and communicate to others how you came to your conclusions about the subject's meaning and/or effect. As you make your case to the readers, it is crucial that you make it clear how your perspective is relevant to them. Ideally, they will come away from your argument intrigued by the new insights you have revealed about the subject.

Step 5: Researching

Although analysis is a crucial phase in writing about any subject, the next step of contributing to society's knowledge and understanding is to participate in the scholarly dialog on the subject. The dialog among scholars, conveyed through academic articles and books, is a crucial resource for any researcher.

Regardless of the type of critical lens you are using for your paper, discovering more about the author of the text can add to your understanding of the text and add depth to your argument. Author pages are located in the Literature Online ProQuest database. Here, you can find information about an author and his/her work, along with a list of recent articles written about the author. This is a wonderful starting point for your research.



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text. You can view it online here: https://oer.pressbooks.pub/theworryfreewriter/?p=120

The next step is to attempt to locate an article about the text itself. It's important to narrow down your database choices to the Literature category. In some cases, the options will be numerous. You can narrow down the choices by adding your critical lens to the search terms. ie "Story of an Hour" and feminism

In the case that your results are very limited, you might need to think outside of the box. Look for the author's name and your critical theory. It's possibly that articles have been written about another of the author's pieces that can still add to your project. Another option is to search the full ProQuest database or the newspaper databases. Some periodicals publish literary criticism and reviews. Since they are popular, rather than academic, sources, these may be found in the periodical databases, rather than the literature options.

Another option is to search for an article relating to the critical lens you've chosen. For example, you might look for an article on the key elements of feminist literary criticism or on Freud's id, ego, and superego to help you support your argument.

Finally, you might look for articles pertinent to an issue discussed in the short story. For example, "The Yellow Wallpaper" is about the treatment of post-partum depression. A modern day article on the appropriate treatment for this illness or a survey of the treatment of the illness could be a fantastic addition to your paper.

Remember, it is helpful to keep a Research Journal to track your research. Your journal should include, at a minimum, the correct MLA citation of the source, a brief summary of the article, and any quotes that stick out to you. A note about how you think the article adds to your understanding of the topic or might contribute to your project is a good addition, as well.

Step 6: Creating a Thesis and Outline

By the time you have completed an analysis of the story and finished your research, you should have a pretty clear idea about what you want to say about the text you've chosen. Your thesis should convey the main point you want to make about the story as viewed through the lens you chose. Perhaps you are looking at "The Yellow Wallpaper" through a feminist lens. Perhaps you want to call attention to the fact that women's voices were unheard in their battles with post-partum depression. Your thesis might say something like, "Gilman used her short story to highlight the inappropriate and often harmful treatment women suffering from post-partum depression received and, in so doing, advocated for women's voices to be heard."

Once your argument is in place, the next step is to create an outline of your paper. Remember–your outline is like the skeleton of your paper. Without a solid foundation, your argument will not work properly.

One common misconception students entertain when they approach literary analysis essays is the idea that the structure of the essay should follow the structure of the literary work. The events of short stories, novels, and plays are often related chronologically, in linear order from the moment when the first event occurs to the moment of the last. Yet, it can be awkward to write a literary analysis using the story's chronology as a basic structure for your own essay. Often, this approach leads to an essay that simply summarizes the literary work. Since a literary analysis paper should avoid summary for summary's sake, the writer should avoid an essay structure that results in that pattern.

If chronology is not the primary structural factor in setting up a literary analysis paper, what is? You might consider the following hints in arranging the points of your own essay:

1. What are your major points?

2. What order will most effectively lead the reader to your perspective on this subject?
3. Paragraph breaks should (a) cue the reader regarding shifts in focus and (b) break down ideas into small enough chunks that the reader does not lose sight of the currently emphasized point. On the other hand, in an academic essay, the paragraphs should not seem "choppy." Rather each should be long enough to develop its point thoroughly before shifting to the next.

In most cases, a literary analysis outline will have the following parts:

1. Introduction (hook, topic, thesis)
2. Summary of the work and background of the author
3. Argument (at least three points)
4. Conclusion

Here is a complete student outline for the story, "Everything in This Country Must," by Colum McCann.

1. Introduction: Have you ever had something precious taken away from you? An object or a pet, how about a person? "Everything in This Country Must" by Colum McCann explores this idea in a unique and disarming way, drawing the reader's attention to the small and yet infinitely important details.
    - Thesis: In "Everything in This Country Must" the author reveals the effect that grief can have on someone through the use of terminology, relationships, imagery, irony, and paradox.

2. Colum McCann's History
    - Born in Dublin, Ireland February 28th, 1965.
    - He was a reporter.
    - He is a Creative Writing Professor at Hunter College.
3. A brief description of "Everything in This Country Must"
    - When was it written?
    - What time is it based in?
    - A short synopsis on what it is about.
4. Terminology
    - Soldiers use expletives. A true reflection of soldiers here.
    - Contrast between American perception on certain words, versus what they mean in the United Kingdom.
    - What Katie calls the soldiers. For the readers' benefit and humor.
5. Relationships
    - Father's relationship with Mammy and Fiachra.
    - Father's relationship with Katie.
    - Father's relationship with the draft horse.
    - Father's relationship with the soldiers.
    - The soldiers' relationship with each other.
6. Imagery

- The vivid descriptions and the extensive use of simile.
- The darkness and rain seem to reflect the mood of the story. (Note: the very last sentence of the story.)

7. Irony

The British soldiers, (possibly the same ones who killed Mammy and Fiachra in a car accident) are the object of all the father's loathing and blame. But they are also the savior of his favorite horse.

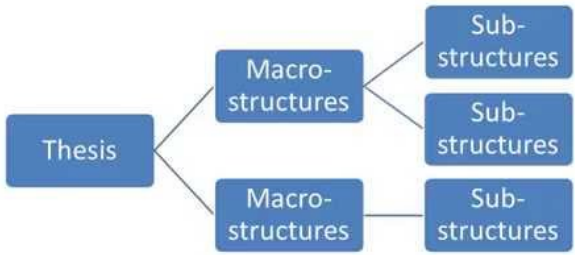
8. Paradox

The entire story is based on saving the draft horse. At the end of the story, though, the father shoots it, and it dies. Why would he do that?

9. Conclusion:

Colum McCann reveals to the reader the innate and devastating effect grief can have on even the best of people. He does this in a beautiful short story and accomplished this through terminology, relationships, imagery, irony, and paradox.

Watch this video with some additional tips for creating an outline:



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Step 7: Drafting

Writing an Introduction

The formula for a successful introduction for a literary analysis essay should feel very familiar to you. Your first task as a writer is to draw your readers into your essay by connecting their own experiences with the topic of your paper. This is accomplished by a hook that relates to your readers and draws them into your argument. For example, if you were writing about the treatment of post-partum depression in "The Yellow Wallpaper," you might

begin your paper with a statistic about the number of women who experience it. This statistic shows readers that your topic has significance to a modern issue and possibly to their own lives, as well.

Once you've successfully hooked your audience, you should transition into your topic. In this case, you'll need to give your readers the author and title of the piece you are discussing. For example, you might say something like, "Post-partum depression is nothing new. In fact, Charlotte Perkins Gilman addresses the improper treatment of post-partum depression in her short story, 'The Yellow Wallpaper.'" This sentence provides a bridge from the hook to the thesis.

Finally, your introduction should include a strong statement of your argument. "Gilman used her short story to highlight the inappropriate and often harmful treatment women suffering from post-partum depression received and, in so doing, advocated for women's voices to be heard." This final piece of the introduction leaves no doubt about the essay's argument.

Remember that, while there are three key parts to an introduction, this does not mean that you will only have three sentences in your introductory paragraph.

Background Information

When writing an analysis of a short story, it's important to consider your readers' experience with the text. In general, you should assume that the reader is familiar with the short story, but that it may have been awhile since they have read it. Therefore, including a brief summary of the plot of the text is an important part of ensuring that your readers can follow your argument.

Here are some basic tips for writing a summary:

- Begin with an *introductory sentence* that states the text's title,

author and main thesis or subject.
- Write in your own words–do not include quotes.
- In less than five sentences, tell readers the general plot of the story, including key characters, events, and ideas.
- Do not insert any of your own opinions, interpretations, deductions or comments into a summary.

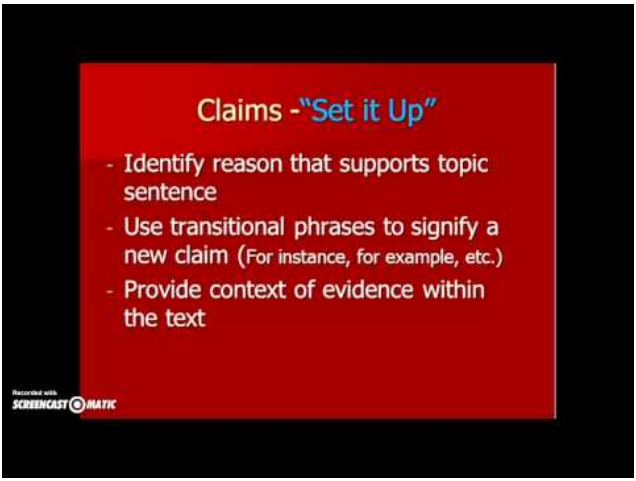
Depending on the type of analysis you are writing, the information about the author might also be an important element to include in your background section. This could be as simple as a single sentence telling readers when the piece was written or as complex as a short paragraph describing the historical and cultural context of the piece.

Body Paragraphs

Remember that your body paragraphs have three key components:

1. Topic sentence that tells readers what point you will be discussing in the paragraph and relates back to the thesis. The topic sentence is also where you would include a transition from the previous paragraph.
2. Support/Evidence for your point from the story, following the Quote Formula.
3. Wrap up the paragraph by explaining to readers how the evidence you've provided proves your point.

Here's a brief video explaining these the parts of a body paragraph in a literary analysis essay:



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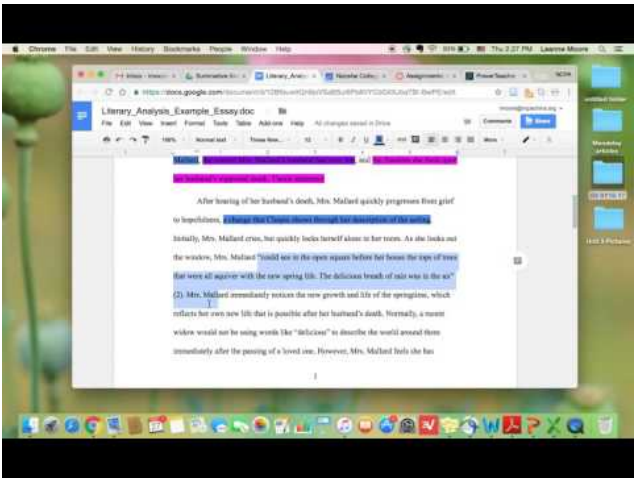
Here's a brief video recapping the process of writing a literary analysis of the short story, "Story of an Hour":



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Incorporating Secondary Sources

One of the keys to a successful literary analysis is engaging in the academic conversation about the author and the work you've chosen. This means that you should incorporate your secondary sources into your analysis, as well as the primary text you are studying. Look for areas where an expert voice will help to strengthen the argument you are making in your paper. Since you've built your argument on your own analysis in combination with your research, this should be a fairly straightforward process. Remember to always surround quotes with your own words and follow the Quote Formula!

Conclusions

WHAT THIS HANDOUT IS ABOUT

This handout will explain the functions of conclusions, offer strategies for writing effective ones, help you evaluate your drafted conclusions, and suggest conclusion strategies to avoid.

ABOUT CONCLUSIONS

Introductions and conclusions can be the most difficult parts of papers to write. While the body is often easier to write, it needs a frame around it. An introduction and conclusion frame your thoughts and bridge your ideas for the reader.

Just as your introduction acts as a bridge that transports your readers from their own lives into the "place" of your analysis, your conclusion can provide a bridge to help your readers make the transition back to their daily lives. Such a conclusion will help them see why all your analysis and information should matter to them after they put the paper down.

Your conclusion is your chance to have the last word on the subject. The conclusion allows you to have the final say on the issues you have raised in your paper, to synthesize your thoughts, to demonstrate the importance of your ideas, and to propel your reader to a new view of the subject. It is also your opportunity to make a good final impression and to end on a positive note.

Your conclusion can go beyond the confines of the assignment. The conclusion pushes beyond the boundaries of the prompt and allows you to consider broader issues, make new connections, and elaborate on the significance of your findings.

Your conclusion should make your readers glad they read your paper. Your conclusion gives your reader something to take away that will help them see things differently or appreciate your topic in personally relevant ways. It can suggest broader implications that will not only interest your reader, but also enrich your reader's life in some way. It is your gift to the reader.

STRATEGIES FOR WRITING AN EFFECTIVE CONCLUSION

One or more of the following strategies may help you write an effective conclusion.

- Play the "So What" Game. If you're stuck and feel like your conclusion isn't saying anything new or interesting, ask a friend to read it with you. Whenever you make a statement from your conclusion, ask the friend to say, "So what?" or "Why should anybody care?" Then ponder that question and answer it. Here's how it might go:You: *Basically, I'm just saying that education was important to Douglass.*Friend: *So what*?You: *Well, it was important because it was a key to him*

feeling like a free and equal citizen.

Friend: *Why should anybody care?*

You: *That's important because plantation owners tried to keep slaves from being educated so that they could maintain control. When Douglass obtained an education, he undermined that control personally.*

You can also use this strategy on your own, asking yourself "So What?" as you develop your ideas or your draft.

- Return to the theme or themes in the introduction. This strategy brings the reader full circle. For example, if you begin by describing a scenario, you can end with the same scenario as proof that your essay is helpful in creating a new understanding. You may also refer to the introductory paragraph by using key words or parallel concepts and images that you also used in the introduction.
- Synthesize, don't summarize: Include a brief summary of the paper's main points, but don't simply repeat things that were in your paper. Instead, show your reader how the points you made and the support and examples you used fit together. Pull it all together.
- Include a provocative insight or quotation from the research or reading you did for your paper.
- Propose a course of action, a solution to an issue, or questions for further study. This can redirect your reader's thought process and help her to apply your info and ideas to her own life or

to see the broader implications.

- Point to broader implications. For example, if your paper examines the Greensboro sit-ins or another event in the Civil Rights Movement, you could point out its impact on the Civil Rights Movement as a whole. A paper about the style of writer Virginia Woolf could point to her influence on other writers or on later feminists.

STRATEGIES TO AVOID

- Beginning with an unnecessary, overused phrase such as "in conclusion," "in summary," or "in closing." Although these phrases can work in speeches, they come across as wooden and trite in writing.
- Stating the thesis for the very first time in the conclusion.
- Introducing a new idea or subtopic in your conclusion.
- Ending with a rephrased thesis statement without any substantive changes.
- Making sentimental, emotional appeals that are out of character with the rest of an analytical paper.
- Including evidence (quotations, statistics, etc.) that should be in the body of the paper.

FOUR KINDS OF INEFFECTIVE CONCLUSIONS

1. The "That's My Story and I'm Sticking to It" Conclusion. This conclusion just restates the thesis and is usually painfully short. It does not push the ideas forward. People write this kind of conclusion when they can't think of anything else to say. Example: In conclusion, Frederick Douglass was, as we have seen, a pioneer in American education, proving that education was a major force for social change with regard to slavery.
2. The "Sherlock Holmes" Conclusion. Sometimes writers will state the thesis for the very first time in the conclusion. You might be tempted to use this strategy if you don't want to give everything away too early in your paper. You may think it would be more dramatic to keep the reader in the dark until the end and then "wow" him with your main idea, as in a Sherlock Holmes mystery. The reader, however, does not expect a mystery, but an analytical discussion of your topic in an academic style, with the main argument (thesis) stated up front. Example: (After a paper that lists numerous incidents from the book but never says what these incidents reveal about Douglass and his views on education): So, as the evidence above demonstrates, Douglass saw education as a way to

undermine the slaveholders' power and also an important step toward freedom.

3. The "America the Beautiful"/"I Am Woman"/"We Shall Overcome" Conclusion. This kind of conclusion usually draws on emotion to make its appeal, but while this emotion and even sentimentality may be very heartfelt, it is usually out of character with the rest of an analytical paper. A more sophisticated commentary, rather than emotional praise, would be a more fitting tribute to the topic. Example: Because of the efforts of fine Americans like Frederick Douglass, countless others have seen the shining beacon of light that is education. His example was a torch that lit the way for others. Frederick Douglass was truly an American hero.
4. The "Grab Bag" Conclusion. This kind of conclusion includes extra information that the writer found or thought of but couldn't integrate into the main paper. You may find it hard to leave out details that you discovered after hours of research and thought, but adding random facts and bits of evidence at the end of an otherwise-well-organized essay can just create confusion. Example: In addition to being an educational pioneer, Frederick Douglass provides an interesting case study for masculinity in the American South. He also offers historians an interesting glimpse into slave resistance when he confronts Covey, the overseer. His relationships with female relatives reveal the importance of

family in the slave community.

WORKS CONSULTED

We consulted these works while writing the original version of this handout. This is not a comprehensive list of resources on the handout's topic, and we encourage you to do your own research to find the latest publications on this topic. Please do not use this list as a model for the format of your own reference list, as it may not match the citation style you are using. For guidance on formatting citations, please see the UNC Libraries citation tutorial.

All quotations are from:

Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, edited and with introduction by Houston A. Baker, Jr., New York: Penguin Books, 1986.

Strategies for Writing a Conclusion. Literacy Education Online, St. Cloud State University. 18 May 2005 <http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/acadwrite/conclude.html>.

Conclusions. Nesbitt-Johnston Writing Center, Hamilton College. 17 May 2005 <http://www.hamilton.edu/academic/Resource/WC/SampleConclusions.html>.

Complete Draft

Here's a sample student paper that uses psychological criticism to analyze Edgar Allen Poe's short story "The Black Cat":

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PART VIII

WRITING ABOUT CREATIVE NON-FICTION: THE ESSAY

48. Introduction to Creative Non-Fiction

DR. KAREN PALMER

Introduction to Creative Nonfiction

Creative nonfiction has existed for as long as poetry, fiction, and drama have, but only in the last forty years or so has the term become common as a label for creative, factual prose. The length is not a factor in characterizing this genre: Such prose can take the form of an essay or a book. For this chapter's discussion, we will focus on the *essay*, since not only will this shorter version of the form allow us to examine multiple examples for a better understanding of the genre, but also, you may have written creative nonfiction essays yourself. Looking carefully at the strategies exhibited by some successful essay writers will give us new ideas for achieving goals in our own writing.

Currently, creative non-fiction is the most popular literary genre. While generations past defined literature as poetry, drama, and fiction, creative nonfiction has increasingly gained popularity and recognition in the literary world.

Creative nonfiction stories depict real-life events, places, people, and experiences, but do so in a way that is immersive, so readers feel emotionally invested in the writing in a way they probably are not as invested in, say, a textbook or a more formal autobiography. While "nonfiction" (without the creative designation) tells true stories as well, there is less emphasis upon and space for creativity. If regular nonfiction were a person, it might say "just the facts, ma'am." Creative nonfiction, on the other hand, might ask "and what

color were her eyes as the moonlight reflected off the ocean into them, and what childhood memories did that moment dredge up?"

The best creative nonfiction tells a true story in an artistic — or literary — way. This means that the story has certain elements, such as descriptive imagery, setting, plot, conflict, characters, metaphors, and other literary devices. Usually, a work of creative nonfiction is narrated in first-person, though sometimes it can be written in third-person. It can be lyric and personal or representing important moments in history. They also might be more objective and scholarly, like many pieces of investigative journalism.

Key Takeaways

Creative Nonfiction Characteristics

- True stories
- Prose (usually, though sometimes poetry)
- Uses literary devices/is more creative and artistically-oriented than "regular" nonfiction
- Often told in first person
- The narrator is often the author or a persona of the author, but not always

When reading a work of creative nonfiction, it is important to remember the story is true. This means the author does not have as much artistic freedom as a fiction writer or poet might, because they cannot invent events which did not happen. It is worthwhile, then, to pay attention to the literary devices and other artistic choices the narrator makes. Readers should consider: what choices were made here about what to include and what to omit? Are there

repeating images or themes? How might the historical context influence this work?

First, let's do what we can to more clearly define the creative nonfiction essay. What is the difference between this kind of essay and an academic essay? Although written in prose form (**prose** is writing *not* visually broken into distinct lines as poetry is), the creative nonfiction essay often strives for a poetic *effect*, employing a kind of compressed, distilled language so that most words carry more meaning than their simple denotation (or literal meaning). Generally, this kind of essay is not heavy with researched information or formal argument; its priority, instead, is to generate a powerful emotional and **aesthetic** effect (*aesthetic* referring to *artistic* and/or *beautiful* qualities).

In this video, Evan Puschak discusses the evolution of the essay with the advent of technology and gives some really interesting insight into the importance of essays.

How YouTube Changed The Essay | Evan Puschak | TEDxLafayetteCollege

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Four Types of Essay

Narrative:

A narrative essay recounts a sequence of related events. Narrative essays are usually autobiographical. Events are chosen because they suggest or illustrate some universal truth or insight about life. In other words, the author has discovered in his/her own experiences evidence for generalizations about themselves or society.

Argumentative/Persuasive:

An argumentative essay strives to persuade readers. It usually deals with controversial ideas, creating arguments and gathering evidence to support a particular point of view. The author anticipates and answers opposing arguments in order to persuade the reader to adopt the author's perspective.

In this video, the instructor gives an overview of the narrative and argumentative essays from the writer's perspective. Looking at the essay from the author's perspective can provide an interesting insight into reading an essay.

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Descriptive:

A descriptive essay depicts sensory observations in words. They evoke reader's imagination and address complex issues by appealing to the senses instead of the intellect. While a narrative essay will certainly employ description, the primary difference between the two is that a descriptive essay focuses only on appealing to the senses, whereas a narrative essay uses description to tell a story.

Expository:

An expository essay attempt to explain a topic, making it clear to readers. In an expository essay, the author organizes and provides information. Examples of this type of essay include the definition essay and the process analysis (how-to).

In this videos, the instructor gives an overview of the descriptive and expository essays from the writer's perspective. Looking at the essay from the author's perspective can provide an interesting insight into reading an essay.

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Choosing a Topic & Reading the Essay:

Steps 1 & 2

Your first step in writing a paper about an essay is to choose an essay and read it carefully. Essays confront readers directly with an idea, a problem, an illuminating experience, an important definition, or some flaw/virtue in the social system. Usually short, an essay embodies the writer's personal viewpoint and speaks with the voice of a real person about the real word. Essays might also explore & clarify ideas by arguing for or against a position.

When reading an essay, ask yourself, "what is the central argument or idea?" Does the essay attack or justify something, or remind readers of something about their inner lives?

In this video, I do a close reading of the essay "The Grapes of Mrs. Wrath ." As in any type of literature, you want to read first for enjoyment and understanding. Then, go back and do a close reading with a pen in hand, jotting down notes and looking for the ways in which the author gets his/her point across to the reader.

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Virginia Woolf's 1942 "The Death of the Moth" is an illuminating example of an argumentative essay. While the essay does not present a stated argument and proceed to offer evidence in the same way conventional academic argument would, it does strive to *persuade*. Consider this piece carefully and see if you can detect the theme that Woolf is developing.

"The Death of the Moth"

Here are some important items to consider when reading an essay.

1. The Thesis:

What is the point of the piece of writing? This should be your central concern. Once you know what the author's main idea is, you can look at what techniques the author uses to get that point across successfully.

The title of Woolf's essay, "The Death of the Moth," offers us, from the start, the knowledge of the work's theme of death. What impression does the essay, as a whole, convey? The writer acknowledges that watching even such a small creature as the moth struggle against death, she sympathizes with the moth and not

with the "power of such magnitude" that carries on outside the window—that of time and inevitable change, for this power is ultimately her own "enemy" as well. In her last line, "O yes, he seemed to say, death is stronger than I am," what lesson has she internalized regarding *herself*, a human being who at first observed the autumn day with no immediate sense of her own mortality?

2. Structure & detail:

- opening lines capture attention
- endings offer forceful assertions that focus the matter preceding them
- body converts abstract ideas into concrete details

While this piece is not a poem, what aspects of it are *poetic*? Consider the imagery employed to suggest the season of death, for all of nature. The writer describes her experience sitting at her desk next to the window, observing the signs of autumn: the plow "scoring the field" where the crop (or "share") has already been harvested. Although the scene begins in morning—characterized by energetic exertions of nature, including the rooks, rising and settling into the trees again and again with a great deal of noise, "as though to be thrown into the air and settle slowly down upon the tree tops were a tremendously exciting experience"—the day shifts, as the essay progresses, to afternoon, the birds having left the trees of this field for some other place. Like the moth, the day and the year are waning. The energy that each began with is now diminishing, as is the case for all living things.

The writer is impressed with the moth's valiant struggle against its impending death because she is also aware of its inevitable doom: "[T] here was something marvellous as well as pathetic about him." As is common in poetry, Woolf's diction not only suggests her attitude toward the subject, but also exhibits a lyrical quality that

enhances the work's effect: She introduces words whose meanings are associated with youth and energy, as well as *sounding* strong with the "vigorous" consonants of "g," "c," "z," and "t"—words such as "vigour," "clamour," and "zest." Yet, the author counters this positive tone with other words that suggest, both in meaning and in their softer sounds, the vulnerability of living things: "thin," "frail," "diminutive," and "futile." In a third category of diction, with words of compliment—"extraordinary" and "uncomplainingly"—

Woolf acknowledges the moth's admirable fight. In addition to indicating the moth's heroism, the very length of these words seems to model the moth's attempts to drag out its last moments of life.

3. Style and Tone

- Style: writing skills that contribute to the effect of any piece of literature
- Tone: attitude conveyed by the language a writer chooses

Woolf's choice of tone for an essay on this topic is, perhaps, what distinguishes it from the many other literary works on the subject. The attitude is not one of tragedy, horror, or indignation, as we might expect. Rather, through imagery and diction, Woolf generates a tone of *wistfulness*. By carefully crafting the reader's experience of the moth's death, through the author's own first person point of view, she reminds us of our own human struggle against death, which is both heroic and inevitable.

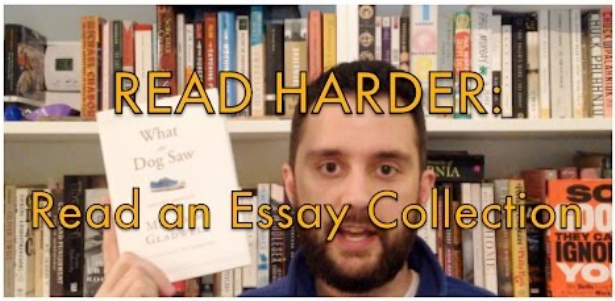
Step 2: Personal Response

The first step in writing a literary comparison essay is to choose your base text–in this case an essay from the Creative Non-fiction Anthology in the next chapter. Once you've chosen an essay, read it carefully using the tips in this chapter and write a personal response. What do you think the main theme is? What drew you to the essay? How can you apply what you learned about essays this week to the one you chose?

For Further Reading

Believe it or not, people actually add essays to their reading lists! Here are a few folks talking about their favorite essay collections. ?

https://youtu.be/ta68Bj7n0o4



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49. Creative Non-Fiction Anthology

Creative Non-Fiction Anthology

Essays in the anthology are presented in alphabetical order by author. You may jump to an author by clicking on their name in the bulleted list below.

- Buzz Bissinger, “Friday Night Lights”
- Judith Ortiz Cofer, “First Love”
- Joan Didion, “Goodbye to All That” and “Why I Write”
- Frederick Douglass, “Learning to Read and Write”
- Richard P. Feynman, “The Value of Science”
- Langston Hughes, “Salvation”
- Steve Mockensturm, “The Grapes of Mrs. Rath”
- George Orwell, “Why I Write”
- Anna Quindlen, “Mothers”
- Richard Rodriguez, “Workers”
- Phil Simmons, “Learning to Fall”
- Amy Tan, “Mother Tongue”
- Sojourner Truth, “Ain’t I a Woman”
- E. B. White, “Once More to the Lake”
- Virginia Woolf, “If Shakespeare Had a Sister” and “The Death of a Moth”

Buzz Bissinger

Buzz Bissinger licensed CC BY SA.

Harry Gerard Bissinger III, also known as Buzz Bissinger and H. G. Bissinger (born November 1, 1954) is an American journalist and author, best known for his 1990 non-fiction book *Friday Night Lights*. He is a longtime contributing editor at *Vanity Fair* magazine. In 2019, HBO released a documentary on Mr. Bissinger titled "*Buzz*".

Born in New York, his father was a former president of the municipal bond firm Lebenthal & Company. He graduated from Phillips Academy in 1972 and from the University of Pennsylvania in 1976, where he was a sports and opinion editor for *The Daily Pennsylvanian*.

Bissinger is perhaps best known for his book *Friday Night Lights: A Town, a Team, and a Dream*, which documents the 1988 season of the football team of Permian High School in Odessa, Texas. This work was the inspiration for the 1993 television series *Against the Grain*, and was turned into a successful film (which was released in October 2004), and a television series which debuted on NBC on October 3, 2006. The book has sold nearly two million copies. In a list of the one hundred best books on sports ever, *Sports Illustrated* ranked *Friday Night Lights* fourth and the best ever on football. ESPN called *Friday Night Lights* the best book on sports over the past quarter-century.

Podcast with Buzz Bissinger

"Friday Night Lights"

Questions to Consider

1. What role does football play in the lives of the people of Odessa?
2. What conclusions concerning Odessa might be drawn from the fact that its high school football program is valued more highly than the town's history?
3. What attributes are celebrated in this essay? What value do those attributes have for the football players and the community? What other personal qualities might be of equal or greater value?

You may use the form here to enter and download your Questions to Consider responses:

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Buzz Bissinger on *Friday Night Lights*:

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Scenes from the show:

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Judith Ortiz Cofer

Judith Ortiz Cofer in the Public Domain

Judith Ortiz Cofer (February 24, 1952 – December 30, 2016) was a Puerto Rican American author. Her critically acclaimed and award-winning work spans a range of literary genres including poetry, short stories, autobiography, essays, and young-adult fiction. Ortiz Cofer was the Emeritus Regents' and Franklin Professor of English and Creative Writing at the University of Georgia, where she taught undergraduate and graduate creative writing workshops for 26 years. In 2010, Ortiz Cofer was inducted into the Georgia Writers Hall of Fame, and in 2013, she won the University's 2014 Southeastern Conference Faculty Achievement Award.

Ortiz Cofer hailed from a family of story tellers and drew heavily from her personal experiences as a Puerto Rican American woman. In her work, Ortiz Cofer brings a poetic perspective to the intersection of memory and imagination. Writing in diverse genres, she investigated women issues, Latino culture, and the American South. Ortiz Cofer's work weaves together private life and public space through intimate portrayals of family relationships and rich descriptions of place. Her own papers are currently housed at the University of Georgia's Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Ortiz Cofer received a B.A. in English from Augusta College, and later an M.A. in English literature from Florida Atlantic University. Early in her writing career, Ortiz Cofer won fellowships from Oxford University and the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, which enabled her to begin developing her multi-genre body of work. Cofer was fluent in English and Spanish and worked as a bilingual teacher

in the public schools of Palm Beach County, Florida, during the 1974-1975 school year. After she received her master's degree and published her first collection of poems she became a lecturer in English at the University of Miami at Coral Gables. In 1984, Ortiz Cofer joined the faculty of the University of Georgia as the Franklin Professor of English and Creative Writing. After 26 years of teaching undergraduate and graduate students, Ortiz Cofer retired from the University of Georgia in December 2013. Ortiz Cofer is best known for creative nonfiction works but she has worked in poetry, short fiction, children's books, and personal narrative. Cofer began her writing career with poetry, which she believed contained "the essence of language." One of her earliest books was Peregrina (1986) which won the Riverstone International Chapbook Competition. She has received various awards such as grants from the Witter Bynner Foundation and the Georgia Council for the Arts, as well as fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts for poetry, the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, and the Florida Fine Arts Council. In 2010 Ortiz Cofer was admitted to the Georgia Writers Hall of Fame.

Transcript of an interview with Cofer.

Judith Cofer interview:

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"First Love"

Questions to Consider

1. How does the author use figurative language to portray her feelings?
2. Does Cofer give readers any clues about the

outcome of the story?

3. How does the author reveal her heritage in the story?

You may use the form here to enter and download your Questions to Consider responses:

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An audio version:

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Joan Didion

Joan Didion CC SA.

Joan Didion (born December 5, 1934) is an American writer who launched her career in the 1960s after winning an essay contest sponsored by *Vogue* magazine. Didion's writing during the 1960s through the late 1970s engaged audiences in the realities of the counterculture of the 1960s and the Hollywood lifestyle. Her political writing often concentrated on the subtext of political and social rhetoric. In 1991, she wrote the earliest mainstream media article to suggest the Central Park Five had been wrongfully convicted. In 2005, she won the National Book Award for Nonfiction and was a finalist for both the National Book Critics Circle Award and the Pulitzer Prize for Biography/Autobiography for *The Year of Magical Thinking*. She later adapted the book into a play, which premiered on Broadway in 2007. In 2017, Didion was profiled in the Netflix documentary *The Center Will Not Hold*, directed by her nephew Griffin Dunne.

Didion recalls writing things down as early as the age of five, though she says she never saw herself as a writer until after her

work had been published. She identified as a "shy, bookish child" who pushed herself to overcome social anxiety through acting and public speaking. She read everything she could get her hands on.

Didion's early education did not follow the traditional format. Didion attended kindergarten and first grade, but because her father was in the Army Air Corps during World War II and her family was constantly relocated, she did not attend school on a regular basis. In 1943 or early 1944, her family returned to Sacramento, and her father went to Detroit to negotiate defense contracts for World War II.

In 1956, Didion received a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from the University of California, Berkeley. During her senior year, she won first place in the "Prix de Paris" essay contest sponsored by *Vogue*, and was awarded a job as a research assistant at the magazine, having written a story on the San Francisco architect William Wilson Wurster.

During her seven years at *Vogue*, Didion worked her way up from promotional copywriter to associate feature editor. While there, and homesick for California, she wrote her first novel, *Run*, *River*, which was published in 1963. Writer and friend John Gregory Dunne helped her edit the book, and the two moved into an apartment together. A year later they married, and Didion returned to California with her new husband. In 1968, she published her first work of nonfiction, *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*, a collection of magazine pieces about her experiences in California.

In 2007, Didion received the National Book Foundation's annual Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters. That same year, Didion also won the Evelyn F. Burkey Award from the Writers Guild of America.

https://youtu.be/w6UrmFheRZY

Interview with Didion:

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- "Goodbye to All That,"
- "Why I Write"
- More from Didion

Questions to Consider (Goodbye to All That)

1. How does Didion employ sensory detail to draw us into her experience of New York City? What general impression of New York is created by the essay?
2. How does Didion use **catalogs** (or lists) to help generate a panoramic impression of the city in her early years there?
3. What do you think is the general message of this essay?

You may use the form here to enter and download your Questions to Consider responses:

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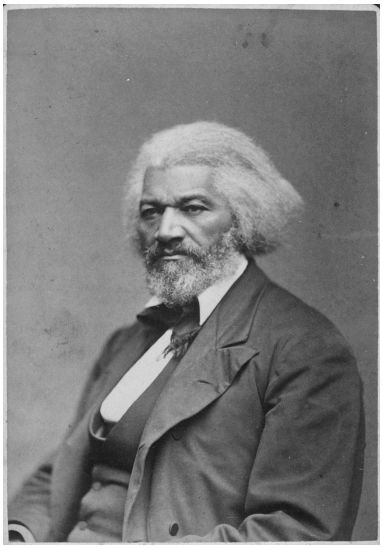
Frederick Douglass



Frederick Douglass in the Public Domain

Frederick Douglass was born in slavery as Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey near Easton in Talbot County, Maryland. He was not sure of the exact year of his birth, but he knew that it was 1817 or 1818. As a young boy he was sent to Baltimore to be a house servant, where he learned to read and write with the assistance of his master's wife. In 1838 he escaped from slavery and went to New York City, where he married Anna Murray, a free colored woman whom he had met in Baltimore. Soon thereafter he changed his name to Frederick Douglass. After fleeing to the North, he worked with other abolitionists and gave public lectures about his life in the South and the slaves' conditions; these public lectures became the basis for *Narrative*.

In *Narrative*, Douglass famously recounts his first experience of literacy and his realization of its importance for freedom. He also makes references to the Bible, Shakespeare, and other works such as *The Columbian Orator*. *Narrative* is often regarded as the finest example of the slave narrative not only for its content but also for its eloquence and literary artistry. The slave narrative refers to (auto)biographical written accounts or fictional works about enslaved people, especially enslaved Africans. While the American slave narrative is itself a distinct literary genre, Douglass's *Narrative* has characteristics corresponding to 19th-century Realism in its

testimonial desire for realistic representations of slaves' lives in North America, its unabashed attention to objective (including brutal) details, and its desire for democracy and human equality.

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"Learning to Read and Write" is an excerpt from Douglass' *Narrative*.

CHAPTER VI

My new mistress proved to be all she appeared when I first met her at the door,—a woman of the kindest heart and finest feelings. She had never had a slave under her control previously to myself, and prior to her marriage she had been dependent upon her own industry for a

living. She was by trade a weaver; and by constant application to her business, she had been in a good degree preserved from the blighting and dehumanizing effects of slavery. I was utterly astonished at her goodness. I scarcely knew how to behave towards her. She was entirely unlike any other white woman I had ever seen. I could not approach her as I was accustomed to approach other white ladies. My early instruction was all out of place. The crouching servility, usually so acceptable a quality in a slave, did not answer when manifested toward her. Her favor was not gained by it; she seemed to be disturbed by it. She did not deem it impudent or unmannerly for a slave to look her in the face. The meanest slave was put fully at ease in her presence, and none left without feeling better for having seen her. Her face was made of heavenly smiles, and her voice of tranquil music.

But, alas! this kind heart had but a short time to remain such. The fatal poison of irresponsible power was already in her hands, and soon commenced its infernal work. That cheerful eye, under the influence of slavery, soon became red with rage; that voice, made all of sweet accord, changed to one of harsh and horrid discord; and that angelic face gave place to that of a demon.

Very soon after I went to live with Mr. and Mrs. Auld, she very kindly commenced to teach me the A, B, C. After I had learned this, she assisted me in learning to spell words of three or four letters. Just at this point of my progress, Mr. Auld found out what was going on, and at once forbade Mrs. Auld to instruct me further, telling

her, among other things, that it was unlawful, as well as unsafe, to teach a slave to read. To use his own words, further, he said, "If you give a nigger an inch, he will take an ell. A nigger should know nothing but to obey his master—to do as he is told to do. Learning would *spoil* the best nigger in the world. Now," said he, "if you teach that nigger (speaking of myself) how to read, there would be no keeping him. It would forever unfit him to be a slave. He would at once become unmanageable, and of no value to his master. As to himself, it could do him no good, but a great deal of harm. It would make him discontented and unhappy." These words sank deep into my heart, stirred up sentiments within that lay slumbering, and called into existence an entirely new train of thought. It was a new and special revelation, explaining dark and mysterious things, with which my youthful understanding had struggled, but struggled in vain. I now understood what had been to me a most perplexing difficulty—to wit, the white man's power to enslave the black man. It was a grand achievement, and I prized it highly. From that moment, I understood the pathway from slavery to freedom. It was just what I wanted, and I got it at a time when I the least expected it. Whilst I was saddened by the thought of losing the aid of my kind mistress, I was gladdened by the invaluable instruction which, by the merest accident, I had gained from my master. Though conscious of the difficulty of learning without a teacher, I set out with high hope, and a fixed purpose, at whatever cost of trouble, to learn how to read. The very decided manner with which he spoke, and strove to impress his wife with the evil consequences of giving me instruction, served

to convince me that he was deeply sensible of the truths he was uttering. It gave me the best assurance that I might rely with the utmost confidence on the results which, he said, would flow from teaching me to read. What he most dreaded, that I most desired. What he most loved, that I most hated. That which to him was a great evil, to be carefully shunned, was to me a great good, to be diligently sought; and the argument which he so warmly urged, against my learning to read, only served to inspire me with a desire and determination to learn. In learning to read, I owe almost as much to the bitter opposition of my master, as to the kindly aid of my mistress. I acknowledge the benefit of both.

I had resided but a short time in Baltimore before I observed a marked difference, in the treatment of slaves, from that which I had witnessed in the country. A city slave is almost a freeman, compared with a slave on the plantation. He is much better fed and clothed, and enjoys privileges altogether unknown to the slave on the plantation. There is a vestige of decency, a sense of shame, that does much to curb and check those outbreaks of atrocious cruelty so commonly enacted upon the plantation. He is a desperate slaveholder, who will shock the humanity of his non-slaveholding neighbors with the cries of his lacerated slave. Few are willing to incur the odium attaching to the reputation of being a cruel master; and above all things, they would not be known as not giving a slave enough to eat. Every city slaveholder is anxious to have it known of him, that he feeds his slaves well; and it is due to them to say, that most of them do give their slaves enough to eat. There

are, however, some painful exceptions to this rule. Directly opposite to us, on Philpot Street, lived Mr. Thomas Hamilton. He owned two slaves. Their names were Henrietta and Mary. Henrietta was about twenty-two years of age, Mary was about fourteen; and of all the mangled and emaciated creatures I ever looked upon, these two were the most so. His heart must be harder than stone, that could look upon these unmoved. The head, neck, and shoulders of Mary were literally cut to pieces. I have frequently felt her head, and found it nearly covered with festering sores, caused by the lash of her cruel mistress. I do not know that her master ever whipped her, but I have been an eye-witness to the cruelty of Mrs. Hamilton. I used to be in Mr. Hamilton's house nearly every day. Mrs. Hamilton used to sit in a large chair in the middle of the room, with a heavy cowskin always by her side, and scarce an hour passed during the day but was marked by the blood of one of these slaves. The girls seldom passed her without her saying, "Move faster, you *black gip*!" at the same time giving them a blow with the cowskin over the head or shoulders, often drawing the blood. She would then say, "Take that, you *black gip*!" continuing, "If you don't move faster, I'll move you!" Added to the cruel lashings to which these slaves were subjected, they were kept nearly half-starved. They seldom knew what it was to eat a full meal. I have seen Mary contending with the pigs for the offal thrown into the street. So much was Mary kicked and cut to pieces, that she was oftener called "*pecked*" than by her name

CHAPTER VII

I lived in Master Hugh's family about seven years. During this time, I succeeded in learning to read and write. In accomplishing this, I was compelled to resort to various stratagems. I had no regular teacher. My mistress, who had kindly commenced to instruct me, had, in compliance with the advice and direction of her husband, not only ceased to instruct, but had set her face against my being instructed by any one else. It is due, however, to my mistress to say of her, that she did not adopt this course of treatment immediately. She at first lacked the depravity indispensable to shutting me up in mental darkness. It was at least necessary for her to have some training in the exercise of irresponsible power, to make her equal to the task of treating me as though I were a brute.

My mistress was, as I have said, a kind and tender-hearted woman; and in the simplicity of her soul she commenced, when I first went to live with her, to treat me as she supposed one human being ought to treat another. In entering upon the duties of a slaveholder, she did not seem to perceive that I sustained to her the relation of a mere chattel, and that for her to treat me as a human being was not only wrong, but dangerously so. Slavery proved as injurious to her as it did to me. When I went there, she was a pious, warm, and tender-hearted woman. There was no sorrow or suffering for which she

had not a tear. She had bread for the hungry, clothes for the naked, and comfort for every mourner that came within her reach. Slavery soon proved its ability to divest her of these heavenly qualities. Under its influence, the tender heart became stone, and the lamblike disposition gave way to one of tiger-like fierceness. The first step in her downward course was in her ceasing to instruct me. She now commenced to practise her husband's precepts. She finally became even more violent in her opposition than her husband himself. She was not satisfied with simply doing as well as he had commanded; she seemed anxious to do better. Nothing seemed to make her more angry than to see me with a newspaper. She seemed to think that here lay the danger. I have had her rush at me with a face made all up of fury, and snatch from me a newspaper, in a manner that fully revealed her apprehension. She was an apt woman; and a little experience soon demonstrated, to her satisfaction, that education and slavery were incompatible with each other.

From this time I was most narrowly watched. If I was in a separate room any considerable length of time, I was sure to be suspected of having a book, and was at once called to give an account of myself. All this, however, was too late. The first step had been taken. Mistress, in teaching me the alphabet, had given me the *inch*, and no precaution could prevent me from taking the *ell*.

The plan which I adopted, and the one by which I was most successful, was that of making friends of all the little white boys whom I met in the street. As many of

these as I could, I converted into teachers. With their kindly aid, obtained at different times and in different places, I finally succeeded in learning to read. When I was sent of errands, I always took my book with me, and by going one part of my errand quickly, I found time to get a lesson before my return. I used also to carry bread with me, enough of which was always in the house, and to which I was always welcome; for I was much better off in this regard than many of the poor white children in our neighborhood. This bread I used to bestow upon the hungry little urchins, who, in return, would give me that more valuable bread of knowledge. I am strongly tempted to give the names of two or three of those little boys, as a testimonial of the gratitude and affection I bear them; but prudence forbids;—not that it would injure me, but it might embarrass them; for it is almost an unpardonable offence to teach slaves to read in this Christian country. It is enough to say of the dear little fellows, that they lived on Philpot Street, very near Durgin and Bailey's ship-yard. I used to talk this matter of slavery over with them. I would sometimes say to them, I wished I could be as free as they would be when they got to be men. "You will be free as soon as you are twenty-one, *but I am a slave for life*! Have not I as good a right to be free as you have?" These words used to trouble them; they would express for me the liveliest sympathy, and console me with the hope that something would occur by which I might be free.

I was now about twelve years old, and the thought of being *a slave for life* began to bear heavily upon my heart. Just about this time, I got hold of a book entitled

"The Columbian Orator." Every opportunity I got, I used to read this book. Among much of other interesting matter, I found in it a dialogue between a master and his slave. The slave was represented as having run away from his master three times. The dialogue represented the conversation which took place between them, when the slave was retaken the third time. In this dialogue, the whole argument in behalf of slavery was brought forward by the master, all of which was disposed of by the slave. The slave was made to say some very smart as well as impressive things in reply to his master—things which had the desired though unexpected effect; for the conversation resulted in the voluntary emancipation of the slave on the part of the master.

In the same book, I met with one of Sheridan's mighty speeches on and in behalf of Catholic emancipation. These were choice documents to me. I read them over and over again with unabated interest. They gave tongue to interesting thoughts of my own soul, which had frequently flashed through my mind, and died away for want of utterance. The moral which I gained from the dialogue was the power of truth over the conscience of even a slaveholder. What I got from Sheridan was a bold denunciation of slavery, and a powerful vindication of human rights. The reading of these documents enabled me to utter my thoughts, and to meet the arguments brought forward to sustain slavery; but while they relieved me of one difficulty, they brought on another even more painful than the one of which I was relieved. The more I read, the more I was led to abhor and detest my enslavers. I could regard them in no other

light than a band of successful robbers, who had left their homes, and gone to Africa, and stolen us from our homes, and in a strange land reduced us to slavery. I loathed them as being the meanest as well as the most wicked of men. As I read and contemplated the subject, behold! that very discontentment which Master Hugh had predicted would follow my learning to read had already come, to torment and sting my soul to unutterable anguish. As I writhed under it, I would at times feel that learning to read had been a curse rather than a blessing. It had given me a view of my wretched condition, without the remedy. It opened my eyes to the horrible pit, but to no ladder upon which to get out. In moments of agony, I envied my fellow-slaves for their stupidity. I have often wished myself a beast. I preferred the condition of the meanest reptile to my own. Any thing, no matter what, to get rid of thinking! It was this everlasting thinking of my condition that tormented me. There was no getting rid of it. It was pressed upon me by every object within sight or hearing, animate or inanimate. The silver trump of freedom had roused my soul to eternal wakefulness. Freedom now appeared, to disappear no more forever. It was heard in every sound, and seen in every thing. It was ever present to torment me with a sense of my wretched condition. I saw nothing without seeing it, I heard nothing without hearing it, and felt nothing without feeling it. It looked from every star, it smiled in every calm, breathed in every wind, and moved in every storm.

I often found myself regretting my own existence, and wishing myself dead; and but for the hope of being free,

I have no doubt but that I should have killed myself, or done something for which I should have been killed. While in this state of mind, I was eager to hear any one speak of slavery. I was a ready listener. Every little while, I could hear something about the abolitionists. It was some time before I found what the word meant. It was always used in such connections as to make it an interesting word to me. If a slave ran away and succeeded in getting clear, or if a slave killed his master, set fire to a barn, or did any thing very wrong in the mind of a slaveholder, it was spoken of as the fruit of *abolition*. Hearing the word in this connection very often, I set about learning what it meant. The dictionary afforded me little or no help. I found it was "the act of abolishing;" but then I did not know what was to be abolished. Here I was perplexed. I did not dare to ask any one about its meaning, for I was satisfied that it was something they wanted me to know very little about. After a patient waiting, I got one of our city papers, containing an account of the number of petitions from the north, praying for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, and of the slave trade between the States. From this time I understood the words *abolition* and *abolitionist*, and always drew near when that word was spoken, expecting to hear something of importance to myself and fellow-slaves. The light broke in upon me by degrees. I went one day down on the wharf of Mr. Waters; and seeing two Irishmen unloading a scow of stone, I went, unasked, and helped them. When we had finished, one of them came to me and asked me if I were a slave. I told him I was. He asked, "Are ye a slave for

life?" I told him that I was. The good Irishman seemed to be deeply affected by the statement. He said to the other that it was a pity so fine a little fellow as myself should be a slave for life. He said it was a shame to hold me. They both advised me to run away to the north; that I should find friends there, and that I should be free. I pretended not to be interested in what they said, and treated them as if I did not understand them; for I feared they might be treacherous. White men have been known to encourage slaves to escape, and then, to get the reward, catch them and return them to their masters. I was afraid that these seemingly good men might use me so; but I nevertheless remembered their advice, and from that time I resolved to run away. I looked forward to a time at which it would be safe for me to escape. I was too young to think of doing so immediately; besides, I wished to learn how to write, as I might have occasion to write my own pass. I consoled myself with the hope that I should one day find a good chance. Meanwhile, I would learn to write.

The idea as to how I might learn to write was suggested to me by being in Durgin and Bailey's ship-yard, and frequently seeing the ship carpenters, after hewing, and getting a piece of timber ready for use, write on the timber the name of that part of the ship for which it was intended. When a piece of timber was intended for the larboard side, it would be marked thus—"L." When a piece was for the starboard side, it would be marked thus—"S." A piece for the larboard side forward, would be marked thus—"L. F." When a piece was for starboard side forward, it would be marked

thus—"S. F." For larboard aft, it would be marked thus—"L. A." For starboard aft, it would be marked thus—"S. A." I soon learned the names of these letters, and for what they were intended when placed upon a piece of timber in the ship-yard. I immediately commenced copying them, and in a short time was able to make the four letters named. After that, when I met with any boy who I knew could write, I would tell him I could write as well as he. The next word would be, "I don't believe you. Let me see you try it." I would then make the letters which I had been so fortunate as to learn, and ask him to beat that. In this way I got a good many lessons in writing, which it is quite possible I should never have gotten in any other way. During this time, my copy-book was the board fence, brick wall, and pavement; my pen and ink was a lump of chalk. With these, I learned mainly how to write. I then commenced and continued copying the Italics in Webster's Spelling Book, until I could make them all without looking on the book. By this time, my little Master Thomas had gone to school, and learned how to write, and had written over a number of copy-books. These had been brought home, and shown to some of our near neighbors, and then laid aside. My mistress used to go to class meeting at the Wilk Street meetinghouse every Monday afternoon, and leave me to take care of the house. When left thus, I used to spend the time in writing in the spaces left in Master Thomas's copy-book, copying what he had written. I continued to do this until I could write a hand very similar to that of Master Thomas. Thus, after a long, tedious effort for years, I finally succeeded in learning how to write.

Questions to Consider

1. How does Douglass's *Narrative* demonstrate the power of both orality, literacy, and the power of truth in creative nonfiction?
2. When Douglass was writing his *Narrative*, slavery was still not abolished in the United States. How do you think this historical context might have led Douglass to specific decisions on the content of *Narrative*?

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Chadwick Boseman reads from *Narrative*:

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Richard P Feynman

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Richard Phillips Feynman (May 11, 1918 – February 15, 1988) was an American theoretical physicist, known for his work in the path integral formulation of quantum mechanics, the theory of quantum electrodynamics, the physics of the superfluidity of supercooled liquid helium, as well as his work in particle physics for which he proposed the parton model. For contributions to the development of quantum electrodynamics, Feynman received the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1965 jointly with Julian Schwinger and Shin'ichirō Tomonaga.

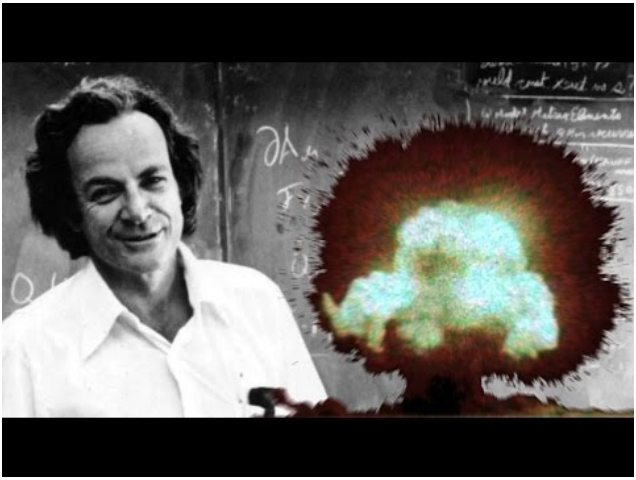
Feynman developed a widely used pictorial representation scheme for the mathematical expressions describing the behavior of subatomic particles, which later became known as Feynman diagrams. During his lifetime, Feynman became one of the best-known scientists in the world. In a 1999 poll of 130 leading physicists worldwide by the British journal *Physics World*, he was ranked as one of the ten greatest physicists of all time.

He assisted in the development of the atomic bomb during World War II and became known to a wide public in the 1980s as a member of the Rogers Commission, the panel that investigated the Space Shuttle *Challenger* disaster. Along with his work in theoretical physics, Feynman has been credited with pioneering the field of quantum computing and introducing the concept of nanotechnology. He held the Richard C. Tolman professorship in theoretical physics at the California Institute of Technology.

Feynman was a keen popularizer of physics through both books

and lectures, including a 1959 talk on top-down nanotechnology called *There's Plenty of Room at the Bottom* and the three-volume publication of his undergraduate lectures, *The Feynman Lectures on Physics*. Feynman also became known through his semi-autobiographical books *Surely You're Joking, Mr. Feynman!* and *What Do You Care What Other People Think?*, and books written about him such as *Tuva or Bust!* by Ralph Leighton and the biography *Genius: The Life and Science of Richard Feynman* by James Gleick.

A lecture from Feynman in 1975:



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Leonard Susskind talks about being friends with Richard Feynman:

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Richard P. Feynman's work "The Value of Science" focuses on the subject of science in a context more *social* than personal. In fact, it was originally offered as a *lecture* in 1955 for the National Academy of Sciences. As you read the work, consider how it might have been shaped by its original intent for lecture delivery to an audience composed primarily of scientists.

"The Value of Science"

Questions to Consider

1. In the beginning of the lecture, Feynman says that in talking not about scientific subjects but rather about *values*, he is "as dumb as the next guy." How does this notion fit into his later argument that one important value of science is that it teaches us to live with uncertainty?
2. How does Feynman use the metaphor of playing music to explain why perhaps more people are not "inspired by our present picture of the universe"?
3. What, according to Feynman, is the importance of our learning to live in a state of uncertainty? How does science help foster this world view?

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Audio of "The Value of Science":

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Langston Hughes (1902-1967)

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A leading figure of the Harlem Renaissance in the United States, Langston Hughes developed an international reputation for his poetry. Hughes spent his childhood in the Midwest; he was born in Joplin, Missouri, but he also lived in Lincoln, Illinois and Cleveland, Ohio. As a young man, he began a college education at Columbia University, but withdrew to travel as a merchant seaman. He eventually completed his education at Lincoln University.

Hughes is particularly known for his perceptive portrayals of black life in America from the twenties through the sixties. He wrote prolifically and in a variety of genres–poems, plays, short stories, and novels. A significant feature of his work is the influence of jazz on his poetry, particularly in Montage of a Dream Deferred (Holt, 1951). Hughes also mentored other young poets and writers like Ralph Ellison. In 1926, he articulated the purpose of young black writers and poets in "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain": "The younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter. We know we are beautiful . . . If colored people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, their displeasure doesn't matter either. We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on top of the mountain free within ourselves."

Donald B. Gibson noted in the introduction to *Modern Black Poets: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Prentice Hall, 1973) that Hughes "differed from most of his predecessors among black poets … in that he addressed his poetry to the people, specifically to black people." Hughes considered himself to be, indeed, a "people's poet" who elevated the black aesthetic while confronting racism and stereotypes in his work.

"Salvation", chapter three from *The Big Sea*

Questions to Consider

1. What is an example of irony in this essay?
2. What is Hughes belief about what it means to be saved? Where does this belief come from?
3. Why does Hughes get up to be saved?
4. Why is Hughes crying at the end of the essay?

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Some additional sources that you might find helpful:

"The Salvation of Langston Hughes: A Conversation with Wallace Best"

A dramatized version:

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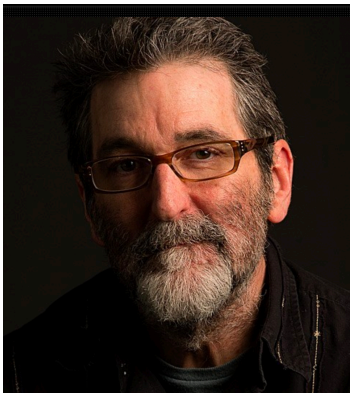
Steve Mockensturm



Steve Mockensturm was born in Ohio and currently lives in Toledo. An artist, Mockensturm is on the board of Madhouse Creative, where he is in charge of design and development. In addition to writing, Mockensturm works with design, website development, and other media. According to his biography on Open Salon, he plays guitar, draws pictures, works with metal, and gardens.

Rough Draft Diaries with Steven Mockensturm.

Mockensturm published "The Grapes of Mrs. Rath" in 2009 on *Open Salon*. The essay can now be found on *Medium*.

The Grapes of Mrs. Rath

Questions to Consider

1. What is the significance of the title?
2. How does the author use allusion?
3. How does the author use imagery?

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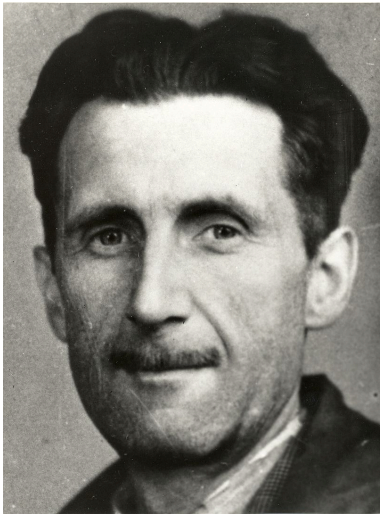
George Orwell



George Orwell Public Domain

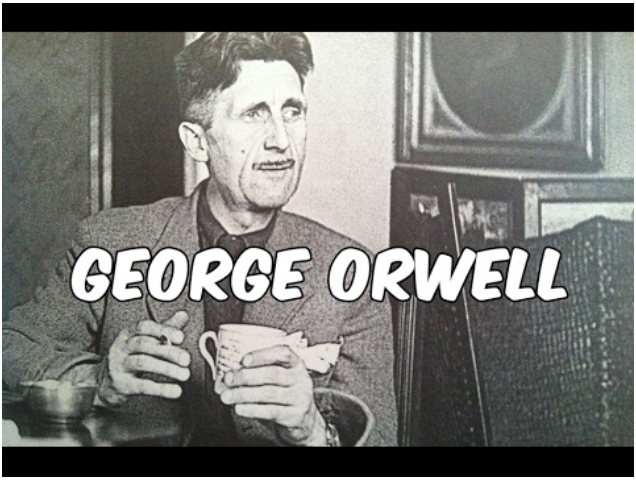
Eric Arthur Blair, born in India on June 25, 1903, and known by his pen name, George Orwell, was an English novelist, essayist, journalist, and critic. His work is marked by lucid prose, awareness of social injustice, opposition to totalitarianism, and commitment to democratic socialism.

Commonly ranked as one of the most influential English writers of the 20th century, and as one of the most important chroniclers of English culture of his generation, Orwell wrote literary criticism, poetry, fiction, and polemical journalism. He is best known for the dystopian novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) and the allegorical novella *Animal Farm* (1945). His book *Homage to Catalonia* (1938), an account of his experiences in the Spanish Civil War, is widely acclaimed, as are his

numerous essays on politics, literature, language, and culture. In 2008, *The Times* ranked him second on a list of the 50 greatest British writers since 1945.

Orwell's work continues to influence popular and political culture, and the term Orwellian — descriptive of totalitarian or authoritarian social practices — has entered the language together with several of his neologisms, including "cold war," "Big Brother," "thought police," "Room 101," "doublethink," and "thought crime."

George Orwell died on January 21, 1950, in London, England.



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George Orwell, author of the novels *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty- Four*, among many other works, brings us back to the personal essay in his 1946 "Why I Write." This essay not only offers a useful example of effective creative nonfiction, but it also gives us a

glimpse into the subject of writing itself, raising questions about our own reasons for writing.

"Why I Write"

Questions to Consider:

1. What does Orwell mean when he says that in his early resistance to becoming a writer, he was "outraging my true nature"? Can you identify with this sentiment in light of your own "natural" tendencies?
2. What kind of "literary activities" did Orwell engage in even when he was not purposefully developing his aspirations of becoming a writer? How then does his attitude contrast his perspective on that period as he looks back now, writing this essay?
3. Consider the "four great motives for writing" listed by Orwell. According to him, how might these motives work against one another?

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George Orwell Why I Write:

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Anna Quindlen

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Anna Marie Quindlen (born July 8, 1952) is an American author, journalist, and opinion columnist.

Her *New York Times* column, Public and Private, won the Pulitzer Prize for Commentary in 1992. She began her journalism career in 1974 as a reporter for the *New York Post*. Between 1977 and 1994 she held several posts at *The New York Times*. Her semi-autobiographical novel *One True Thing* (1994) served as the basis for the 1998 film starring Meryl Streep and Renée Zellweger.

Anna Quindlen was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She graduated in 1970 from South Brunswick High School in South Brunswick, New Jersey and then attended Barnard College, from which she graduated in 1974. She is married to New Jersey attorney Gerald Krovatin, whom she met while in college.

Anna Quindlen left journalism in 1995 to become a full-time novelist.

In 1999, she joined *Newsweek*, writing a bi-weekly column until she announced her semi-retirement in the May 18, 2009, issue of the magazine. Quindlen is known as a critic of what she perceives to be the fast-paced and increasingly materialistic nature of modern American life. Much of her personal writing centers on her mother, who died from ovarian cancer, when Quindlen was 19 years old.

She has written nine novels, several of which have been adapted into motion pictures. *One True Thing* was made into a feature film in 1998. *Black and Blue* and *Blessings* were made into television movies in 1999 and 2003, respectively.

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"Mothers" was first published as a column entitled "On Being Mom" in *Newsweek*.

"Mothers"

Questions to Consider

1. What do you think Quindlen is trying to say about motherhood?
2. What details stand out in the essay? What significance do they have?
3. What can readers who are not parents learn from reading this essay?

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Richard Rodriguez

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Richard Rodriguez (born July 31, 1944) is an American writer who became famous as the author of *Hunger of Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez* (1982), a narrative about his intellectual development.

He was born on July 31, 1944, into a Mexican immigrant family in San Francisco, California. Rodriguez spoke Spanish until he went to a Catholic school at 6. As a youth in Sacramento, California, he delivered newspapers and worked as a gardener. He graduated from Sacramento's Christian Brothers High School.

Rodriguez received a B.A. from Stanford University, an M.A. from Columbia University, was a Ph.D. candidate in English Renaissance literature at the University of California, Berkeley, and attended the Warburg Institute in London on a Fulbright fellowship. A noted prose stylist, Rodriguez has worked as a teacher, international journalist, and educational consultant, and he has appeared regularly on the Public Broadcasting Service show, *NewsHour*. Rodriguez's visual essays, *Richard Rodriguez Essays*, on "The News Hour with Jim Lehrer" earned Rodriguez a Peabody Award in 1997. Rodriguez's books include *Hunger of Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez* (1982), a collection of autobiographical essays; *Mexico's Children* (1990); *Days of Obligation: An Argument With My Mexican Father* (1992), which was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize; *Brown: The Last Discovery of America* (2002); and *Darling: A Spiritual Autobiography* (2013). Rodriguez's works have also been published in *Harper's Magazine*, *Mother Jones*, and *Time*.

While his book received widespread critical acclaim and won several literary awards, it also stirred resentment because of Rodriguez's strong stands against bilingual education and affirmative action.

Interview in the Paris Review with Richard Rodriguez on faith.

Interview with Richard Rodriguez on heritage and identity:

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Another interview with Rodriguez:

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"Complexion" (AKA "Workers") Chapter 4 from *Hunger of Memory*

Here is an audio of the essay:

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Questions to Consider

1. How does Rodriguez feel about manual labor? How do you know?

2. What are some of the descriptive details that help to move the narrative forward, illustrate the characters, and illuminate the message?
3. What do you think the main message of this chapter is?

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Philip Simmons

Phil Simmons (1957-7/27/2002) was an associate professor of English at Lake Forest College in Illinois, a contributing editor to *UU World*, and a speaker and worship leader at his church and in his community. At the age of 35, Simmons was diagnosed with ALS/ Lou Gehrig's disease and given 5 years to live. Defying the odds, Simmons lived 10 years beyond his diagnosis.

Simmons earned his BA in English and Physics from Amherst College, his MFA in Creative Writing from Washington University, and his PhD in English from the University of Michigan. He taught literature and creative writing for nine years.

He wrote and published fiction and literary criticism. His book Deep Surfaces was published in 1997. Learning to Fall, a series of essays based on his talks at Norther Shore Unitarian Church, was self-published and then picked up by Bantam in 2002. His only

fictional novel, Rattlesnake Ridge, was published posthumously in 2004.

- Information on Simmons: https://www.learningtofall.com/
- A tribute to Simmons by his editor.

"Learning to Fall" is an excerpt from the author's book *Learning to Fall*

Questions to Consider

1. Explain the distinction between "problem" and "mystery."

2. Can you give examples of "problems" on the one hand, and "mysteries" on the other?

3. What does Simmons say our attitude toward mystery should be? Is there anything in Simmons' story that makes his opinion more credible?

(Additional questions in the Reading Guide.)

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Audio version of "Learning to Fall":

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Trailer for documentary *The Man Who Learned to Fall*:

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Read more essays by Simmons.

Amy Tan

Amy Tan in the Public Domain

Amy Ruth Tan (born February 19, 1952) is an American author known for the novel *The Joy Luck Club*, which was adapted into the film *The Joy Luck Club* in 1993 by director Wayne Wang.

Tan was born in Oakland, California. She is the second of three children born to Chinese immigrants John and Daisy Tan. Tan attended Marian A. Peterson High School in Sunnyvale for one year. When she was fifteen years old, her father and older brother Peter both died of brain tumors within six months of each other.

Tan's mother subsequently moved Amy and her younger brother, John Jr., to Switzerland, where Amy finished high school. During this period, Amy learned about her mother's previous marriage to another man in China, of their four children (a son who died as a toddler and three daughters), and how her mother left these children behind in Shanghai. This incident was the basis for Tan's first novel *The Joy Luck Club*. In 1987, Amy traveled with Daisy to China. There, Amy met her three half-sisters.

Tan had a difficult relationship with her mother, who wanted Tan to be independent and stressed that Tan needed to make sure she was self-sufficient. Tan's mother died in 1999.

Tan later received bachelor's and master's degrees in English and linguistics from San Jose State University. She took doctoral courses in linguistics at University of California, Santa Cruz, and University of California, Berkeley.

Tan has written several other novels, including *The Kitchen God's*

Wife, *The Hundred Secret Senses*, *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, *Saving Fish from Drowning*, and *The Valley of Amazement*. Tan's latest book is a memoir entitled *Where The Past Begins: A Writer's Memoir* (2017). In addition to these, Tan has written two children's books: *The Moon Lady* (1992) and *Sagwa, the Chinese Siamese Cat* (1994), which was turned into an animated series that aired on PBS.

Learn more about Amy Tan on her website.

Watch this interview with Amy Tan:

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://oer.pressbooks.pub/theworryfreewriter/?p=206

"Mother Tongue" (online location)

Correct citation: Tan, Amy. "Mother Tongue." *The*

Threepenny Review, no. 43, 1990, pp. 7–8. *Sharett Brown*, http://www.u.arizona.edu/~sab4949/mother.html. Accessed 2 May 2021.

While the Yavapai College Library does not have access to this essay, YC students can read the essay as originally published by clicking on the link and then choosing the Red "Read Online" button (you may have to login to YC first):

"Mother Tongue"

Questions to Consider

1. What do you think the author is trying to say?
2. What is the essay's theme?
3. You read Amy Tan's short story, "Two Kinds," in our last module. What insight might a reader gain from reading the two together?

You may use the form here to enter and download your Questions to Consider responses:

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Sojourner Truth

Sojourner Truth in the Public Domain

Sojourner Truth was born Isabella Baumfree in the town of Swartekill, in Ulster County, New York. Historians think that she was born around 1779. She was born into slavery with as many as 12 other siblings. Her father, James, was captured and sold as a slave in modern day Ghana. Her mother, on the other hand, was already a slave in Guinea Africa. They were both sold to Colonel Hardenberg and taken to his plantation in New York. As a slave, Sojourner truth grew up speaking Dutch. She was separated from her parents at the age of 9 and sold to a man named Johny Neely after the death of her previous owner.

In 1817 Sojourner Truth's new owner made her marry a slave by the name of Thomas, which resulted in the birth of a son and two daughters. On July 4th, 1827, New York was in the process of emancipating all slaves. Before Truth got her freedom, she escaped with her infant daughter, Sophia. After her escape, she learned that her son, Peter, was sold to a plantation owner in Alabama. She went to court and fought for her son, winning his freedom.

On June 1, 1843, Baumfree changed her name to Sojourner Truth, devoting her life to Methodism and the abolition of slavery. In 1844, Truth joined the Northampton Association of Education and Industry in Northampton, Massachusetts. In 1850, Truth spoke at the first National Women's Rights Convention in Worcester, Massachusetts. She soon began touring regularly with abolitionist George Thompson. In 1851 Truth spoke her famous "Ain't I a Woman"

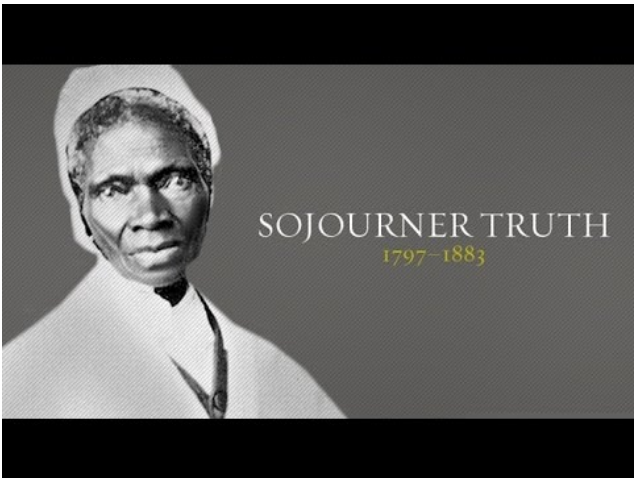
speech at the Ohio Women's Rights Convention. One of her major projects was to secure land grants from the federal government for former slaves. She argued that ownership of private property, and particularly land, would give African Americans self-sufficiency and free them from a kind of indentured servitude to wealthy landowners.

Truth kept fighting for women's rights and women's suffrage until her death in her home in Battle Creek Michigan on November 26, 1883. She is buried alongside her family at the Battle Creek Cemetery. Truth is remembered as one of the foremost leaders of the abolitionist movement and an early advocate of women's rights.

Sojourner Truth's speech entitled "Ain't I a Woman?" is widely acclaimed for its voice of confidence and unyielding belief in all-inclusive Woman's Rights.

What few people know of Sojourner Truth's "Ain't I a Woman?" Speech given in 1851 is that it actually had two very different transcriptions, with the more popular one being formally incorrect. Sojourner Truth was Northerner, with a northern accent, yet the most popularized transcription was by Frances Dana Barker Gage, a white abolitionist at the time. Gage controversially transcribed Truth by using the voice of a southern black slave, even though she wasn't. The original transcription, by Truth's close friend Reverend Marius Robinson, was much more true to the original speech. Robinson released this speech in a popular Anti-Slavery Newspaper, marking its first publishing to the masses.

Here's a video about Sojourner Truth's life:



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- Short Biography of Sojourner Truth
- The Narrative of Sojourner Truth

Here's a video reenactment of an interview with Truth:

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"AIN'T I A WOMAN?" SPEECH (TRANSCRIBED BY REV. MARIUS ROBINSON)

June 21, 1851

May I say a few words? I want to say a few words about this matter.

I am a woman's rights [*sic*].

I have as much muscle as any man, and can do as much work as any man.

I have plowed and reaped and husked and chopped and mowed, and can any man do more than that?

I have heard much about the sexes being equal; I can carry as much as any man, and can *eat as much* too, if *I can get it*.

I am as strong as any man that is now.

As for intellect, all I can say is, *if women have a pint and man a quart – why can't she have her little pint full?*

You need not be afraid to give us our rights for fear we will take too much, for we cant take more than our pint'll hold.

The poor men seem to be all in confusion, and don't know what to do.

Why children, if you have woman's rights, give it to her and you will feel better.

You will have your own rights, and they wont be so much trouble.

I cant read, but I can hear.

I have heard the bible and have learned that Eve caused man to sin.

Well if woman upset the world, do give her a chance to set it right side up again.

The Lady has spoken about Jesus, how he never spurned woman from him, and she was right.

When Lazarus died, Mary and Martha came to him with faith and love and besought him to raise their brother.

And Jesus wept – and Lazarus came forth.

And how came Jesus into the world?

Through God who created him and woman who bore him.

Man, where is your part?

But the women are coming up blessed be God and a few of the men are coming up with them.

But man is in a tight place, the poor slave is on him, woman is coming on him, and he is surely between-a hawk and a buzzard.

"AIN'T I A WOMAN?" SPEECH (TRANSCRIBED BY FRANCES DANA GAGE)

April 23, 1863

Well, chillen, whar dar's so much racket dar must be som'ting out o'kilter.

I tink dat, 'twixt de niggers of de South and de women at de Norf, all a-talking 'bout rights, de white men will be in a fix pretty soon.

But what's all this here talking 'bout?

Dat man ober dar say dat women needs to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have de best place eberywhar.

Nobody eber helps me into carriages or ober mud-puddles, or gives me any best place.

-And ar'n't I a woman?

Look at me.

Look at my arm.

I have plowed and planted and gathered into barns, and no man could head me.

-and ar'n't I a woman?

I could work as much as *(c) eat as much* as a man, (when *(d) I could get it*,) and bear de lash as well

-and ar'n't I a woman?

I have borne thirteen chillen, and seen 'em mos' all sold off into slavery, and when I cried out with a mother's grief, none but Jesus heard

-and ar'n't I a woman?

Den dey talks 'bout dis ting in de head.

What dis dey call it?

Dat's it, honey.

What's dat got to do with women's rights or niggers' rights?

If my cup won't hold but a pint and yourn holds a quart, wouldn't ye be mean not to let me have a little half-measure full?

Den dat little man in black dar, he say women can't have as much rights as man 'cause Christ wa'n't a woman.

Whar did your Christ come from?

Whar did your Christ come from?

From God and a woman.

Man had nothing to do with him.

If de fust woman God ever made was strong enough to turn de world upside down all her one lone, all dese togeder ought to be able to turn it back and git it right side up again, and now dey is asking to, de men better let 'em.

Bleeged to ye for hearin' on me, and now ole Sojourner ha'n't got nothin' more to say.

Questions to Consider

1. How do you think the mention of Mary and Jesus is significant to Truth's argument?
2. Does Truth's comparison of herself to a man strengthen or weaken her argument? Why or why not?
3. What does Truth compare "intellect" to and how is it relevant to her argument?

You may use the form here to enter and download your Questions to Consider responses:

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://oer.pressbooks.pub/theworryfreewriter/?p=206#h5p-37

Alice Walker reads "Ain't I a Woman?":

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E. B. White

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Elwyn Brooks White (July 11, 1899 – October 1, 1985) was an American writer. He was the author of several highly popular books for children, including *Stuart Little* (1945), *Charlotte's Web* (1952), and *The Trumpet of the Swan* (1970). n addition, he was a writer and contributing editor to *The New Yorker* magazine, and also a co-author of the English language style guide *The Elements of Style*.

White graduated from Cornell University with a bachelor of arts degree in 1921. While at Cornell, he worked as editor of *The Cornell Daily Sun*. After graduation, White worked for the United Press and the American Legion News Service in 1921 and 1922. From September 1922 to June 1923, he was a cub reporter for *The Seattle Times*. When *The New Yorker* was founded in 1925, White submitted manuscripts to it. Katharine Angell, the literary editor, recommended to editor-in-chief and founder Harold Ross that White be hired as a staff writer.

E. B. White published his first article in *The New Yorker* in 1925, then joined the staff in 1927 and continued to contribute for almost six decades. Best recognized for his essays and unsigned "Notes and Comment" pieces, he gradually became the magazine's most important contributor. From the beginning to the end of his career at *The New Yorker*, he frequently provided what the magazine calls

"Newsbreaks" (short, witty comments on oddly worded printed items from many sources) under various categories such as "Block That Metaphor." He also was a columnist for *Harper's Magazine* from 1938 to 1943.

In 1949, White published *Here Is New York*, a short book based on an article he had been commissioned to write for *Holiday*. In 1959, White edited and updated *The Elements of Style*. This handbook of grammatical and stylistic guidance for writers of American English was first written and published in 1918 by William Strunk Jr., one of White's professors at Cornell. White's reworking of the book was extremely well received, and later editions followed in 1972, 1979, and 1999.

In 1978, White won a special Pulitzer Prize and received the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1963 and honorary memberships in a variety of literary societies throughout the United States. The 1973 Oscar-nominated Canadian animated short *The Family That Dwelt Apart* is narrated by White and is based on his short story of the same name.

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"Once More to the Lake" was published in *Harper's Magazine* in 1941.

"Once More to the Lake"

Questions to Consider

1. How would you describe the mood of this essay?

How does the author create the mood?

2. How does White use imagery to illustrate the changes to the lake?
3. What is the central idea of the essay?

You may use the form here to enter and download your Questions to Consider responses:

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Audio Version of "Once More to the Lake":

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Virginia Woolf

Virginia Woolf in the Public Domain

Virginia Woolf was born into late-Victorian London on January 25, 1882. Her mother was Julia Stephen (1846-1895), famous in the artistic and literary world for her beauty and in high demand for her skills as an informal nurse. Woolf's father was Sir Leslie Stephen (1832-1904), a well-known literary critic and founder of the *Dictionary of National Biography*, who struggled with a sense of inadequacy in spite of his reputation. The family lived at 22 Hyde Park Gate in London and rented a summer house at St. Ives in Cornwall. The children grew up with governesses, and while the boys went on to school and university, the girls received much less formal education, a particularly sore point with Woolf, and a spur for her feminism. However, she read hugely from her father's library, and developed a formidable and individual intellect. Her parents' literary circle also helped to develop the foundations of her writing and thought.

Woolf wrote of being sexually molested by both her Duckworth half-brothers, which powerfully affected her. Her sister, Laura, was institutionalized in the 1890s. Her mother suddenly died of influenza when Virginia was 13, "the worst disaster that could happen," as she put it, which led to her first mental breakdown. In his own grief, her father leaned heavily on the girls, causing immense resentment. Virginia's mental health remained very fragile,

but she carried on studying, reading, and writing, while helping her sister with their father's demands.

When Leslie died of cancer in 1904, Virginia was saddened but liberated. With his death, she saw the Victorian past falling away. She suffered another nervous breakdown, which led to a suicide attempt, that year, but improved when she and her siblings left Hyde Park Gate and moved to unfashionable Bloomsbury to begin their own lives. Virginia enjoyed teaching adult courses at Morley College and working on her writing. Virginia worked on her first novel, *The Voyage Out*, which describes a young woman's journey into South America and illness. In 1912, she agreed to marry Leonard Woolf (1880-1969), a Jewish writer who worked for the Colonial Civil Service, in spite of her uncertainty about their compatibility. Leonard provided support when Virginia made another suicide attempt in 1913, and had another breakdown in 1915, when *The Voyage Out* was finally published. With him, she established the Hogarth Press, named after their London house, in 1917, which published works by both Leonard and Virginia, as well as by other contemporary writers.

Over the next decades, Woolf produced many acclaimed modernist works, in spite of further troubles with mental health, often drawing on her own past and continually pushing the boundaries of form and perspective. *Night and Day* (1919) describes young people trying to find their own way in the new 20th century; *Jacob's Room* (1922) memorializes her family, as does *The Waves* (1931), with its fluid depiction of childhood's effects, and also *To the Lighthouse* (1927), a resurrection of her parents and early life. Her essays collected in *The Common Reader* volumes (1925 and 1932) cover a broad variety of subjects, and *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), set on a single day, depicts the way life attempts to carry on in spite of the shock of the World War I. An inventive biographer, Woolf wrote *Orlando: A Biography* (1928), a love letter to Vita Sackville-West, to equality, and to androgyny; *Flush, A Biography* (1933), a playful tour de force about the Brownings' dog; and *Roger Fry: A Biography* (1940), which attempts truly to capture the life of her friend. A

Room of One's Own (1929), like the later *Three Guineas* (1938), is a seminal feminist text. *The Years* (1934) cost her a great effort, again returning to Victorian childhood's effects on adulthood, and led to another depression. Fearing a German invasion of England, as well as another breakdown, she drowned herself in the River Ouse near her home in Sussex in 1941. She had completed her final novel, *Between the Acts*, the story of a historical pageant at a country house menaced by war. The end of the book has the central couple sitting alone in a kind of prehistoric dark, but finishes with the line, "They spoke." Even in darkness and apparent meaninglessness, Woolf's characters speak, and she is drawn to record them.

Biography of Virginia Woolf, Part 1:

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Biography Part 2:

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Biography Part 3:

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The Library of Congress compilation of information about American Women Writers.

- "If Shakespeare Had a Sister"
- "The Death of the Moth"

Questions to Consider (Shakespeare's Sister)

1. Why do you think Woolf blends fact and fiction in this

essay?

2. How does using Shakespeare and his imaginary sister impact Woolf's argument?
3. A Room of One's Own was published in 1929. What has changed for women in the last 100 years? Do you think Woolf would be pleased, or would she see more work to do?

You may use the form here to enter and download your Questions to Consider responses:

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50. Writing About Creative Non-Fiction: The Literary Comparison Essay

You began the process of writing your literary comparison paper in the Introduction to Creative Nonfiction chapter by choosing an essay, reading it carefully, and writing a personal response. In this chapter, we will move through the remaining steps of writing your paper.

Step 3: Choose a Second Piece for Comparison

The key to a good comparison essay is to choose two subjects that connect in a meaningful way. The purpose of conducting the comparison is not to state the obvious, but rather to illuminate subtle differences or unexpected similarities.

When writing a literary comparison paper, the point is to make an argument that will make your audience think about your topic in a new and interesting way. The best comparison papers come from an analysis of two works similar enough to illuminate each other. For example, perhaps reading one helps you to better understand the other.

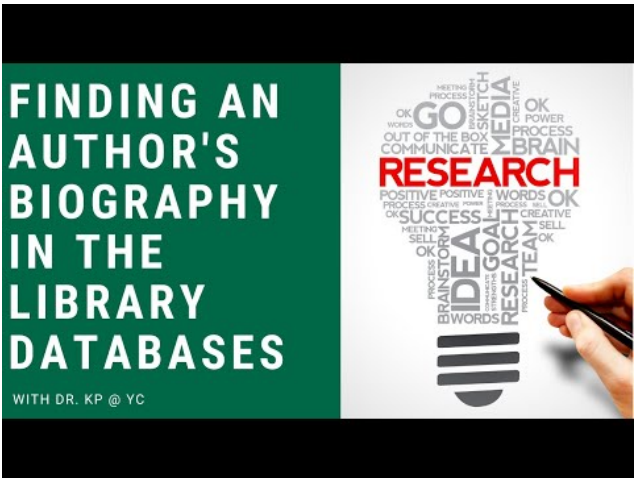
To this end, your next goal is to choose a second piece of literature from our text that you think can illuminate the point being made in the essay you've chosen. For example, if you've chosen "Mother Tongue," by Amy Tan, you might choose her short story, "Two Kinds" to highlight the two sides of the mother-daughter

relationship. If you've chosen "Complexion," by Richard Rodriguez, you might choose Marge Piercy's poem "To Be of Use" to highlight the authors' focus on the importance of hard work. Or, you might want to look at two essays to see how different authors highlight a different aspect of the same topic, like Orwell's and Didion's essays both entitled, "Why I Write."

Step 4: Research

Once you've chosen a second piece, it's time to enter into the academic conversation to see what others are saying about the authors and the pieces you've chosen.

Regardless of the focus of your essay, discovering more about the authors of the texts you've chosen can add to your understanding of the texts and add depth to your argument. Author pages are located in the Literature Online ProQuest database. Here, you can find information about an author and his/her work, along with a list of recent articles written about the author. This is a wonderful starting point for your research.



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The next step is to attempt to locate articles about the texts themselves. For poems and short stories, it's important to narrow down your database choices to the Literature category. For essays, you might have better luck searching the whole ProQuest library with the ProQuest Research Library Article Databases or databases like Flipster that include publications like newspapers and magazines.

Finally, you might look for articles pertinent to an issue discussed in the essay. For example, "Learning to Fall" is about dealing with a terminal illness. An article about how to help people deal with this issue could be a valuable addition to your argument.

Remember, it is helpful to keep a Research Journal to track your research. Your journal should include, at a minimum, the correct MLA citation of the source, a brief summary of the article, and any quotes that stick out to you. A note about how you think the article

adds to your understanding of the topic or might contribute to your project is a good addition, as well.

Step 5: Thesis & Outline

Similar to other academic essays, the literary comparison essay starts with a thesis that clearly introduces the two subjects that are to be compared and the reason for doing so.

Begin by deciding on your basis for comparison. The basis of comparison could include items like a similar theme, the way the authors use literary elements, or the way both pieces represent an important issue.

Once you've decided on the basis of comparison, you should focus on the points of comparison between the two pieces. For example, if you are focusing on how the literary elements used impact the message, you might make a table of each of the literary elements. Then, you'd find examples of each element from each piece. Remember, a comparison includes both similarities and differences.

By putting together your basis of comparison and your points of comparison, you'll have a thesis that both makes an argument and gives readers a map of your essay.

A good thesis should be:

- Arguable (not a statement of fact)
    - Statement of Fact: "Both 'Salvation' and 'Falling' talk about faith."
    - Arguable: "Simmons provides a perspective on faith that would have helped Hughes work through his own dilemma."
- Provable by the text (not a personal opinion)
    - Personal Opinion: "'Mother Tongue' is an amazing essay."
    - Provable by the Text: "Tan uses similar strategies in both

'Mother Tongue' and 'Two Kinds' to create her message."

- Surprising (not obvious)
  - Obvious: "The daughter in 'Two Kinds' has a different view of her mother than Tan's adult perspective in 'Mother Tongue.'"
  - Surprising: "Like the second half of the musical piece at the end of 'Two Kinds,' 'Mother Tongue' provides readers with the rest of the story, showing how the author has deepened her understanding of her mother and created a relationship that both honors her own values and the traditions of her mother."
- Specific (not general)
  - General: "Both 'Ain't I a Woman' and 'If Shakespeare had a Sister' highlight the plight of women."
  - Specific: "Though written by women of two very different experiences, both Truth and Woolf use similar strategies to convince their audiences that women deserve to be treated equally."

The organizational structure you choose depends on the nature of the topic, your purpose, and your audience. You may organize compare-and-contrast essays in one of the following two ways:

1. Block: Organize topics according to the subjects themselves, discussing one piece and then the other.
2. Woven: Organize according to individual points, discussing both pieces point by point.

Exercises: Create a Thesis and Outline

You'll want to start by identifying the theme of both pieces and deciding how you want to tie them together. Then, you'll want to think through the points of similarity and difference in the two pieces.

In two columns, write down the points that are similar and those that are different. Make sure to jot down quotes from the two pieces that illustrate these ideas.

Following the tips in this section, create a thesis and outline for your literary comparison paper.

Here's a sample thesis and outline:

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Step 6: Drafting Tips

Once you have a solid thesis and outline, it's time to start drafting your essay. As in any academic essay, you'll begin with an introduction. The introduction should include a hook that connects your readers to your topic. Then, you should introduce the topic. In this case, you will want to include the authors and titles of both pieces. Finally, your introduction should include your thesis. Remember, your thesis should be the last sentence of your introduction.

In a literary comparison essay, you may want to follow your introduction with background on both pieces. Assume that your readers have at least heard of the author or the piece, but that they might not have read the essay in awhile. For example, if you were writing about "Learning to Fall," you might include a brief introduction to Simmons and a short summary of the essay. The background section should be no more than two short paragraphs.

In the body of the paper, you'll want to focus on supporting your argument. Regardless of the organizational scheme you choose, you'll want to begin each paragraph with a topic sentence. This should be followed by the use of quotes from your two texts in support of your point. Remember to use the quote formula–always introduce and explain each quote and the relationship to your point! It's very important that you address both literary pieces equally, balancing your argument. Finally, each paragraph should end with a wrap up sentence that tells readers the significance of the paragraph.

Here are some transition words that are helpful in tying points together:

Transition Words for a Comparison Essay

Comparison	**Contrast**
One Similarity	One Difference
Another Similarity	Another Difference
Both	Conversely
Like	In Contrast
Likewise	Unlike
Similarly	While
In a Similar Fashion	Whereas

Finally, your paper will end with a conclusion that brings home your argument and helps readers to understand the importance/significance of your essay.

In this video, an instructor explains step by step how to write an essay comparing two films. Though you will be writing about literature, the same information applies.

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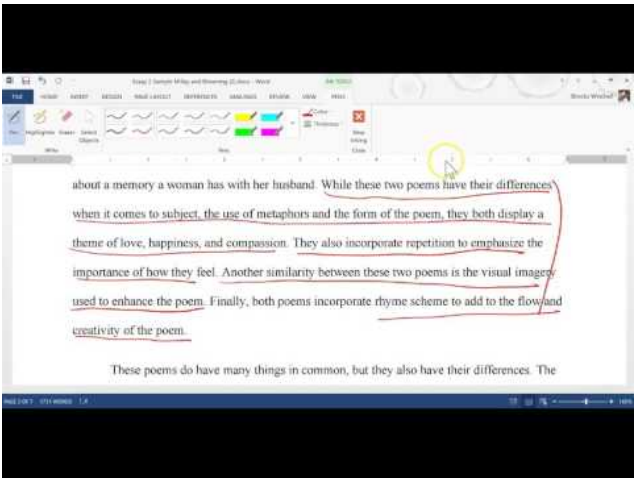
Here's another instructor explaining how to write a comparison essay about two poems. Note the similarities between the two videos.



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Here's a sample paper:

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PART IX

BONUS: WEBSITE CREATION

Both as a student and in other aspects of your life, you are likely to write information and publish it on the Internet. Some examples of possible Internet writing that many people take part in are chat rooms, social networking sites like Facebook, voice over Internet protocol (VOIP) platforms like Skype, e-mail, mobile cellular texts, online distance-learning coursework (such as assignments, group projects, and discussion forums), blogs and responses to blogs, instant messages, wikis, nonacademic discussion forums, web-based memorial sites, responses to online newspaper articles, and job applications.

Like every other kind of written communication, how you write on the web depends on the purpose of the specific situation. In reality, you've probably developed a pretty good system for running your web-based communication. If you have an unlimited text plan and maintain at least one profile on a social networking site, you concern yourself with matters of voice, message, audience, tone, attitude, and reception hundreds of times a day.

Because you are often multitasking while texting or using the web and because of the speed and convenience of electronic communication, this realm is prone to carelessness. In casual situations, rules are minimal and you can use very casual language that includes abbreviations, slang, and shortcuts. Your use of a casual tone depends solely on whether your audience will understand what you are saying. Writing for school or work does not fall into the casual category. In these situations, you cannot use abbreviations, slang, and shortcuts. In fact, you need to use proper punctuation, grammar, and capitalization. You should also

use traditional writing rules and a more formal tone when responding to diverse populations and serious situations.

Whether writing in a casual or formal situation, always be aware of the population that has access to your content. Also keep in mind that even if you are writing on a semiprivate venue like a class-wide course management system or on an invitation-only wiki, your digital text can easily be copied by someone with access and forwarded to someone without access. So don't write anything that could embarrass or cause problems for you or others.

Due to the non-private nature of the Internet, you should not provide full contact information. Depending on the situation, you might choose to use your full name (such as in an online class or on a memorial condolence site) or you might choose to use a pseudonym (such as in a response to a blog or to an online newspaper article). Only give your phone number and address when you are on very secure sites. Never post your social security number online.

You may have occasion to create websites for professional, personal, or academic reasons. Whether you create a site to supplement a résumé, to serve as a common, virtual family meeting place, or to showcase individual or collaborative work you've done for a class, you should follow some basic guidelines to make sure your website is aesthetically pleasing and well organized, so that it functions well and accomplishes its purpose.

Making a Website Aesthetically Pleasing

Use relevant photos, graphics, and font variations to give your site interest. Leave plenty of white space. A crowded web page is not inviting. Use an easily readable font and font size with ample leading. Small tight text is hard to read and many Internet searchers will skip such a site and move on to the abundance of other choices. Take care when choosing background and font colors. Make sure your background does not engulf the text making it hard to read.

As a rule, make your background light and your text dark. Take care when choosing background effects. A very busy background can detract from your content.

Making a Website Well Organized

Plan for little or no scrolling. Instead include clearly marked navigation links to move to different parts of the information. Include navigation links to all parts of the website from all pages so a person never feels stuck on a page. Design an overall look that holds from page to page to give your website consistency. Use an easily recognizable format for navigation links so that they clearly stand out.

Making a Website Work Well

Use images that are between forty and one hundred kilobytes to ensure clear images that are easily and quickly loaded on most people's computers. Since one hundred kilobytes is the maximum suggested size, you will have your best luck if you stay well below that level. Match your level of use of technology tools to your needs. Don't add features just to try to make your site impressive. Remember that the more features you add, the more likely it is that someone will have trouble with your site. Some people's computers will have trouble with very involved opening pages that include audio and video. If you choose such an opening page, also include an override button for people who can't or don't want to view the opening page. Make sure all the links and paths are very obvious and that they all work smoothly.

Making a Website Accomplish Its Purpose

Make sure the home page is uncluttered and clearly states the purpose of the website. This is the main chance you have of attracting attention. Make the website as visual as possible. The more quickly a person can glance through web content, the more likely the person is to take in the information. You can make a site visual by including subheadings that stand out, relevant images, short blocks of text, white space between blocks of text, and numbered or bulleted lists. Keep the website up to date. Depending on the content and purpose of the website, keeping it up to date could be a daily, weekly, or monthly chore. Consider that a site that is out of date ceases to be visited. Include a contact link so viewers can reach you. Remember that anyone with Internet can access your site. Take care with the information you post. Always assume that your instructors, employers, parents, or friends will see it.

Creating an E-portfolio

Just a few years ago, a portfolio, or collection of your work, would most likely have been a collection of printed papers arranged in a file folder or hand-bound into a booklet. Today you are more likely to create an **e-portfolio**, a digital collection of your work that is usually accessible to others online. Whether paper or digital, the purpose of a portfolio remains for you to showcase and reflect upon your skills.

General Portfolio Guidelines

As with any other kind of communication, base your portfolio planning on your reasons for building one. For example, you might

design a portfolio to apply for admission or scholarships to colleges, to apply for a job, to network with other professionals in your field, to complete a school assignment, to collect your artistic work, or to explore a personal interest. The following guidelines are useful for all portfolios, regardless of whether they are designed to meet an academic, professional, aesthetic, or social purpose:

- Consider carefully your choices of what to include (known as **artifacts**) and choose those that showcase the most impressive variety of your skills. If you are a writer, showcase different writing skills or a progression in the development of your writing skills (showing "before" and "after" drafts). If you are a salesperson, showcase different types of sales accomplishments.
- Keep the number of choices under ten in an employment portfolio so that a prospective employer could reasonably look at all the options. If you have multiple categories, such as writing samples, work accomplishments, and volunteer experiences, you could consider having up to ten items within each category.
- Read through all the choices to make sure you are 100-percent pleased about the content. Do not rely on memory to tell you that an item is OK to use.
- Label and date each selection.
- Create an explanation of each chosen item.
- Make sure all your selected items are free of errors.
- Arrange your selections from most to least impressive unless you have a reason to arrange them differently, such as in chronological order, keeping in mind that someone might start through your portfolio and not finish it.

Electronic Portfolio Guidelines

Follow these guidelines to take better advantage of the forms, functions, and features an online environment can bring to portfolios:

- Create an introductory page with **links** to the other pages. Make sure the introductory page is short enough to minimize scrolling.
- Consider establishing or incorporating some kind of social presence (perhaps with an appropriate photo or with an audio or video greeting) on the introductory page. Make sure your tone (the relationship between your portfolio's voice and your audience) achieves an appropriate level of formality, depending on the working relationship you already have with your audience.
- Include a one-line description of each link as a pre-introduction to the portfolio item when you list the links on the introductory page.
- Choose whether to include **multimedia** pieces, such as video and audio clips, depending on the capabilities of the site where you are posting your portfolio.
- Convert each page or file to a **PDF file** or a **JPEG** so that you can be assured that the formatting will remain fixed. After you create each PDF file or JPEG, open it to make sure it converted properly.
- Traverse your e-portfolio thoroughly when you're finished building it to check out all the links and make sure everything is working and looks OK. Then ask a friend to do the same on a different computer. Ideally you should road test the portfolio from both a PC and a Mac platform. By road testing, you are effectively anticipating your portfolio's reception (the relationship between your audience and the message you are conveying).

- Include a link to a self-profile as well as a link to your résumé.
- Keep your e-portfolio up to date. This task is especially important if your e-portfolio is posted where others can access it without your knowledge.

Here is a sample student website from Dr. Palmer's ENG 101 course: karenpalmer.weebly.com