

A Practical
INTRODUCTION to
WRITING STUDIES



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A WORKBOOK FOR STUDENT WRITERS

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Necessity, who is the mother of invention.

Plato



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TO THE INSTRUCTOR

This book integrates creative, business, and expository writing. My purpose in creating the text is to provide students with an accessible guide that helps them to see and appreciate the history, theory, and practice of writing in English. While I do recognize the benefits of teaching these areas separately, I am concerned that many students leave high school and college without ever engaging in a meaningful dialogue about what connects all of the areas of writing. Also, I am concerned that students develop false assumptions about one form of writing as opposed to others. This book helps students to see a more cooperative relationship among the texts they read and write in creative, business, and expository writing courses. It gives novice writers an opportunity to see writing in action and the opportunity to expand their view of writing using models of texts from selected genres and formats produced in the various subject areas in writing studies. This book does not seek to be *comprehensive* or *complete*. It is intended to be practical. I have chosen to include brief explanations of sample texts from the genres and formats that I believe will help students to better envision writing as a tool for communicating in the academy and the workplace. The writing samples are derived from instructional materials that I have developed and used over the years to teach creative, business, and expository writing courses.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Introduction to Writing Studies is a custom-published book based on the notion that all texts are dialogic, or interrelated. It might best serve instructors who are in search of a practical text for a writing course that operates more like a writing workshop. The instructor must emphasize the process of writing, but give considerable attention to the importance of the written product and its practicality inside and outside the academy. The instructor who uses this book needs to understand that students improve their writing greatly by systematically practicing reading, summarizing, critiquing, synthesizing, and writing texts. In short, this book serves well those instructors who require students to write a lot.

The course an instructor builds around this book can stand as an example of an efficient course for any introductory writing class. With any book, an instructor is free to employ it as he or she pleases. The samples are meant to stimulate conversation about writing. The instructor can use the assignments that accompany each sample, or the instructor can create his or her own assignments for each of the samples provided in the book. There are two important factors to keep in mind when selecting or creating course assignments. First, students must be actively involved in doing serious work, even if it is not always as sophisticated as some of the better sample texts. Finally, students must be actively involved in producing a variety of texts, and they must receive sufficient feedback on the texts they produce.

A Practical Introduction to Writing Studies has the following features:

- It takes a very practical approach to teaching writing, providing explanations and a range of model texts that students can discuss, evaluate, or even imitate in order to produce their own texts.

- It prepares students to succeed as writers in other disciplines by using selected genres and formats within writing studies to help them learn for themselves that writing changes based on rhetorical contexts.
- It lists assignments for each sample in order to make it easy to use this text with advanced and novice writers. Students at any level can practice summarizing, critiquing, and synthesizing information.
- It acknowledges that all students (even those who are less experienced in reading and writing) are capable of moving beyond the mechanical work of writing to participate in the critical conversations in writing studies.
- It recognizes the importance of helping students at all levels learn at least one basic method for writing research papers and two of the more commonly used documentation formats.
- It uses the Socratic method to expose students to the history, theory, and research that has been conducted in writing studies.
- It promotes the idea that writing studies is an essential and substantive area of study for high school students and college students.

GENERAL STRUCTURE

In this book, creative, business, and expository writing are discussed in three sections with forums that address questions students typically have about writing. A brief explanation of each selected genre is provided along with various samples of texts. All of the samples are open to revision and (re)interpretation; they are teaching tools that help students learn more about writing while they practice writing. Section I gives students an opportunity to explore and apply the basic elements of short fiction and poetry. Section II helps students to develop an understanding of the role of memos, letters, and resumes in the workplace and how document design can enhance the rhetorical effectiveness of these texts. Section III introduces students to the essay and the documentation styles outlined by the Modern Language Association (MLA) and the American Psychological Association (APA). In the appendixes, instructors and students will find an essay discussing my teaching philosophy, a sample of the essay format, a brief handbook on sentences and punctuation with practice exercises, a selected bibliography, peer evaluation forms, and research evaluation forms.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the many students who have influenced me to create this book. They assure me that there are aspects of writing that can be taught. I am especially indebted to those who reviewed the book and loaned me valuable ideas as I worked on this project. Questions and comments can be sent to writingstudies@3HP.us

J. K. Dennis



SECTION I

CREATIVE WRITING

THE SHORT STORY

The short story is one genre in creative writing. Others are poems, novels, novellas, and plays. The short story varies in length, but it is generally short enough to be read in one sitting. The short story should inspire, enlighten, or entertain its readers. There are many ways to write a short story. There are also many elements of fiction that can be manipulated in order to help writers produce an effective story. Below is a description of two types of short stories and some of the elements of fiction that are helpful to know when writing short stories.

TYPES OF SHORT STORIES

In his book *Creative Writing*, George Williams notes that Somerset Maugham suggested that there are two branches along which the short story developed (see more on Williams in the bibliography). These branches are named after two influential short story writers: Guy de Maupassant and Anton Chekhov.

The Maupassantian Story

The Maupassantian story typically has a simple plot with a beginning, middle, and end. Sometimes it might have an unusually surprising ending. Most traditional stories are based on the Maupassantian story.

The Chekhovian Story

The Chekhovian story examines the interior life or the mental state of characters rather than their actions. The Chekhovian story predicts the technique called “stream-of-consciousness,” which is evident in the work of many modern writers.

PLOT

The plot gives a story structure. Most traditional stories arrange actions in a unified order from the beginning through the middle to the end. As the writer, you need to show readers when and where the story takes place, who the characters are, and what the conflict will be. The introduction is called the **exposition**. Once you have gotten readers into the story, they are expecting something to happen—a **conflict**. The moment of crisis that results from the conflict is called a story’s **climax**. The conflict and climax have to be believable for readers. The **denouement** is how the story winds itself down after the climax. It signals the ending of the story. The ending of a story can be written in many ways; you should try to write an ending that complements the entire story.

CHARACTERIZATION

Characterization is the way that characters are described and developed in a story. The characters that you create for your story need to be believable. You have to craft your characters well so that they come alive for readers. Vivid description, identifiable mannerisms, or distinguishable ways of speaking help to make characters more appealing to readers. The **protagonist** is a person (or thing) who plays the leading role in the story. The person (or thing) who goes against the protagonist is the **antagonist**. Characters who change in the story are **dynamic**; those who don’t are **static**.

Also, the central character is usually considered **round**, if he, she, or it has a well-developed personality. A **flat** character is just the opposite.

SETTING

The setting consists of the **time** and **place** in which a story takes place. The setting can be important or unimportant in a story. But you have to understand your characters and where and how they live in order to present the appropriate context.

POINT OF VIEW

The point of view is the perspective from which you present the events of your story. You have to decide if the story will be best told by a narrator who is outside or inside the story. The **inside view** is usually more intimate, allowing the narrator to tell the story from a character's perspective or in the first person. The **outside view** provides greater flexibility and gives the story a great degree of objectivity. Second person or third person is used to tell a story using an outside view. The **omniscient** point of view will give you the most flexibility. The omniscient view allows you to have an inside and outside view of everything in the story. It is assumed by some readers to be the view of the writer.

THEME

The theme is the **message** that one derives from the story as a whole. A solid, well-written story will have many themes, and different readers will always find different themes.

Sample #1

The Chair by the Window

Ross Phillips

At school, I never really learned how important writing was. I had to spend one summer weekend at my granddaddy's house for my writing education. He died in August just before school started. As his body was lowered into the ground, I stood beside my brothers, Ewell and Raymond. Our mother dressed us in black suits that we seldom wore because we hardly attended Sunday services or funerals. I leaned over to Ewell and Raymond and asked, "I wonder if Grandpa Zell is going to hell for being such a liar?"

"Don't be stupid, Claddie," whispered Ewell. He was ten and tall for his age.

"Yeah, don't be stupid," said Raymond, who was one year younger than Ewell. "You don't go to hell for lying. You got to kill somebody or steal a car or something."

"I'm glad I'm not seven anymore. You're too stupid to know anything when you're seven," said Ewell.

"That's right, Claddie. You're seven and you're stupid," said Raymond. His black hair blinded him because it was always long in the front. Raymond reached over and punched me on the shoulder. I punched him. Then Ewell punched us both and told us to be quiet because daddy looked like he had something important to say.

Daddy took off the dark sunglasses that made him look like a policeman. Daddy taught English over at the high school, and he wrote editorials for the newspaper. Everybody knew him. But the day of the funeral, he was a different man. He was silent. His eyes were swollen and pink. This was the first time that I had ever seen him cry. Until that day, I believed boys didn't cry after they had turned ten. But I should have known better than to listen to Ewell, considering the fact that he was the first to cry when my daddy told us that we had to spend one weekend with Grandpa Zell in Madison.

"But Madison is nothing but one big cornfield," hollered Ewell. "I hate cornfields."

"Me too," said Raymond as he tossed my baseball in the air.

"Stop crying, Ewell. It's only for two days. You'll have a good time," said daddy.

"Daddy, Raymond took my baseball, and he won't give it back."

"No, I didn't! Claddie is a liar," yelled Raymond.

"Raymond, give Claddie back his baseball and don't call your brother a liar."

As the car moved along the dirt road that led to Grandpa Zell's house, Ewell sat in the front seat telling daddy about the Cornfield Murderer he read about in Miss Brown's class at school. Raymond and I sat in the backseat popping gum. I had my baseball gripped in my left hand to keep Raymond from stealing it.

"There's your Grandpa Zell's house, boys," said daddy. We all sat up in our seats to see the wide stretch of green that surrounded the small white house. Daddy stopped the car in front of a tall man dressed in red suspenders and a starched white shirt. Grandpa Zell waved with one of his large hands. I thought God must have made him a giant because I had never seen a man with hands like his. I believed Grandpa Zell could hold at least ten baseballs in one hand. I was almost sure that those two days with him would be filled with baseball and all the corn that I could stand. However, things didn't happen as I had hoped.

When I stepped out of the car with my baseball, Grandpa Zell looked me in the eye and said, "You are going to break my window with that baseball, aren't you? You can't fool me. I'm an old-timer. I know you. You're going to break my window."

He was right. I broke one of the windows facing the cornfield. But it was Ewell and Raymond's fault because they were the ones who wanted to throw the ball near the house. They snickered each time I threw them the ball. My punishment was worse than any licking I could have received from a switch or belt. I had to sit alone writing. There was nothing worse than sitting near a window in a wooden chair wrestling with a blank page while my brothers ran wild. They pressed their faces against the window and ran by screaming my name. When I finished writing, Grandpa Zell held the paper up in the sunlight, and he checked every word while I stood beside him gripping the arm of his rocking chair, hoping that the sentences I wrote would please him, even if the handwriting was not legible.

"Is it good enough?" I asked him.

"Is what good enough?" he groaned.

"My writing."

"Well, I don't see how I can make out what this word is here and what that word is over there. I guess you will just have to go back and start over."

I started over many times that day because I seldom pleased him with my fantastic stories of make-believe worlds and monsters that came from Mars and swallowed two boys that I knew. Grandpa Zell looked at the paper and he frowned and groaned as if my words caused him pain. He shrugged his shoulders and insisted that he knew seven-year-olds in Alabama who could write a story better than I could. So Grandpa Zell sent me back to that uncomfortable little chair and that squeaky table to dream of better things to write. While I watched my brothers running through the green cornfield having the time of their lives, I fought a blank page in a war that seemed impossible for me to win. When I thought I had written something pleasing for my granddaddy, he held it under a lamp and asked me if I thought it was my best.

"I don't know," I told him.

"Either it is or it ain't. Which one?" he asked.

"I guess it is good," I told him.

"Well, it doesn't sound like you believe it." Unconvinced, he sent me back to work until I produced my best.

After finishing, I marched out to the porch where the crickets were singing. My granddaddy shined his flashlight onto my scribbled words and asked me if I thought it was my best work. By then, I was smart enough to say yes because I truly thought it was the best that I could do at the time. Convinced, he asked me to read it, and I did.

That last day in Madison, I was free to spend the day playing in the green cornfield with my brothers—without the baseball. Driving home, daddy asked us if we had a good time, and he asked us what we did. Ewell and Raymond complained how boring it was. Then, I told daddy about the chair and table by the window and all the writing I did for Grandpa Zell.

"What did you do, Claddie?" asked daddy.

"He broke a window with that baseball," said Ewell.

"Grandpa told him not to throw that baseball near the house, but Claddie wouldn't listen. He never listens because he is stupid," said Raymond.

"They made me do it!" I protested. "I tried to tell Grandpa Zell, but he didn't believe me. He should have made them write too, daddy."

"Write what?" he asked.

"Grandpa Zell made me write for him as my punishment. Then he read what I wrote and told me to write it over again." Daddy frowned and shook his head. I knew that he would be on the phone with Grandpa Zell just as soon as we got home. Then Ewell and Raymond snickered.

"You're so stupid, Claddie," hollered Ewell.

“Yeah, you’re the stupidest seven-year-old on the planet,” said Raymond.

“If I’m so stupid then why did Grandpa Zell tell me that I was smarter than the seven-year-olds in Alabama.”

“That’s because Grandpa Zell can’t read, stupid,” laughed Ewell.

“He can too. Everybody can read. I saw him,” I said.

“Grandpa Zell can’t read. Can he daddy?” asked Raymond. My daddy was silent just like he was at Grandpa Zell’s funeral. I watched his face in the rearview mirror. I waited for him to speak. For such brief seconds, it felt as if that moment was filled with time. I was confused and stiff. My body felt hot all over. The inside of my hands began to sweat, and I could sense the anger swelling inside my head. When my daddy confirmed what Ewell and Raymond had known all along, I realized that I was alone. The reason why I cried all the way home was not because Ewell and Raymond called me a crybaby. It was because that was the first time that I had ever truly felt stupid.

Sample #2

The Barbershop

Ernest Whipple

Mr. Sam Steel was the new schoolteacher in Harpersville and he had the nerve to admit to folks that he didn't have any religion. That is what first made us think he was one of those peculiar human beings. We asked him about it one day he came into the barbershop. He came in every Saturday just before closing because nobody was there but me and maybe old Clipper Wilson. Mr. Steel came in wearing a tie, shiny shoes, and those eyeglasses that were too big for his face. He would sit and read a book. Every now and then, he took those eyeglasses off and stared into the distance like the person who might understand what he was thinking was somewhere far away from Harpersville. We tried our best to have conversations with him. Old Lou and Redd were always in the barbershop because they were old and didn't have anything else to do. One time we were all in the barbershop and Redd asked Mr. Steel if he thought we would be expecting rain anytime soon. Old Lou asked him if he wanted to know the best place to catch catfish. Mr. Steel just shook his head and kept reading.

One Saturday, Miss Odelia and Miss Stokes bought new hats, put on white gloves, and made a special trip to the barbershop just to ask Mr. Steel if he liked breast of chicken and peach pie. After a while, Mr. Steel started to talk to us. And everything that came out of his mouth had something to do with Belle Wilson. He hadn't been in Harpersville a good month and we were already noticing how he was chasing after Clipper's daughter. We tried to warn Mr. Steel. We told him that he had better stay away from Belle Wilson if he didn't want a bullet in his back.

"But old Mr. Wilson doesn't seem like the type of man who would be interested in hurting human beings," he said.

"Oh, yes he would!" hollered Old Lou.

"Take our word for it. A Wilson is nothing but fifty years of trouble," said Redd. "Albert knows better than any of us. Just ask him how he got those bullet holes in his wall.

"How?"

"Clipper's daddy did it. Jack Wilson took a shotgun and fired it straight into this barbershop. My daddy was standing right where I'm standing this very moment and I saw the bullets lodge right over in that wall," I told him.

Mr. Steel took off those eyeglasses and looked at me like the words he heard had already beaten him to the chair before I could trim one hair from his beard. I told Mr. Steel about those Wilsons the first day he stepped into the barbershop and asked me about those holes in that wall. But Mr. Steel had plenty of education and there just didn't seem to be much room for the lessons we were trying to teach him. He was about as stubborn as Clipper Wilson's daddy.

Jack Wilson was full of pride and would shoot you dead before he let you get the best of him. He was struck by lightning and stayed in a coma for a whole month. When Jack came out of that coma, he started drinking gin like water and carrying that shotgun because he thought somebody was trying to kill him. Jack stayed in the jailhouse and didn't do much to keep that farm up. Then Clipper started stealing any little thing he could get his hands on. Sometimes, both of them would be sitting in the jailhouse together. Jack would blacken Clipper's eyes so bad that they had to keep father and son in separate cells.

"Albert, tell him about Mary. It was a real shame the way Jack drove her out of Harpersville," said Old Lou.

Mary was the prettiest girl in Harpersville. Everybody was in love with her, especially Old Lou. Mary came running into the barbershop, crying her eyes out. She said that her daddy made Clipper steal things for him, and he would beat him if he didn't. So my daddy marched down to that jailhouse to get Clipper out. Everybody in Harpersville knew my daddy was a real Christian and lived his life by example. He posted bail for Clipper and not Jack. He even gave Clipper a job sweeping hair after school because he figured it might do him some good in the long run. But most of us look back and don't think it did much good. Clipper had been coming into my barbershop to sweep hair in the evenings long after my daddy died. I told him all the time that he didn't have to do it. But he'd grab the broom out of my hand and sweep. He wouldn't say one word to me, Old Lou, or Redd. He'd just sweep, go home, and come back and do it all again the next day.

When Jack Wilson found out what Mary did, he put her out of the house and she went to be the live-in maid for Miss Gringle, and she started courting Eugene Wheeler. But Mr. Wheeler didn't like his Eugene seeing Mary because of Jack Wilson. Jack followed them all over Harpersville. They'd go to the movie house holding hands, and Jack would tie that shotgun to his leg with a string and wear overalls so he could pass the doorman and spy on Eugene from three rows back. Then Mr. Wheeler got scared for the life of Eugene when Jack Wilson brought that shotgun to church one Sunday and the Reverend spent the entire service trying to convince him not to shoot Mr. Wheeler.

Mary's heart was so broken that she ran off to God-knows-where and nobody has heard from her since. Jack Wilson thought Eugene was hiding her from him, so he went up and down the street shooting. He stood right outside of this barbershop calling for Mary. He was drunk for sure. He could barely hold that shotgun steady. But nobody knew where Mary was. Jack didn't believe my daddy when he told him that nobody had seen Mary. Then he fired a shot straight throw the window. I'll never forget how that bullet broke that glass into a million pieces and missed my daddy's head by just inches.

"Thank God, old Jack Wilson wasn't steady with that shotgun or Albert's daddy would have been dead on that very day," said Old Lou.

"If you asked me, somebody should have shot Jack. What kind of man goes around shooting innocent people?" asked Redd.

"A man like one of those Wilsons, that's who," I said.

Clipper promised he'd pay back every cent for the cost of the window, but Uncle Sam sent us letters and we were off to the war. Clipper was the only one of us not scared to go. Everybody survived except Eugene Wheeler. Clipper came back to Harpersville with a wife and a chest full of shiny pins and medals. Both of them got to walk in the parade we gave the governor's wife when she came to visit, and people started to think they were respectable. Jack Wilson was long dead by then and that farm was willed to Clipper. Then soon came Belle, and she grew up to be the mirror image of Mary. We told Clipper that Belle looked exactly like Mary and that Mr. Steel was chasing her, but he ignored us and kept sweeping. In all the years he's been sweeping hair to pay back his daddy's debt, Clipper never once let me give him a free haircut or shave.

Mr. Steel walked into the barbershop and all he could talk about was marrying Belle.

"Take my word for it, Mr. Steel, Clipper Wilson is never going to let you marry Belle." I told him.

"He'll shoot you first!" hollered Old Lou.

"Those Wilsons never change!" said Redd.

"Well, he will just have to shoot me. Nothing is going to ruin this day," he said. "Albert, I need to look my best today."

"What's so special about this day? It's just like any other Saturday, if you ask me."

"I'm going to talk to the most hated man in Harpersville and ask his permission to marry Belle," said Mr. Steel.

"Marriage is a big step for a young man like yourself. My daddy always told me to look both ways before deciding on anything. Did you look both ways, Mr. Steel?"

"There's no need. I know my mind, and I know how I feel about Miss Belle. My folks said I couldn't have selected a finer woman for a wife."

"Did you tell them about the type of folks she comes from? That's important these days," said Old Lou.

"No. There is nothing wrong with the Wilsons. They're respectable people."

"I've never seen a respectable Wilson in my life!" hollered Redd.

"I think the Wilsons are good people. Just the other day, Belle's momma made me one of her homemade apple pies. She couldn't bring it to me herself, so Belle walked from her house all the way over to the schoolhouse. You know Mrs. Wilson has been sick these last few weeks."

"I didn't know that," said Old Lou.

"Clipper never tells us anything," I said.

"What's wrong with her?" asked Redd.

"The doctors here don't even know. Belle tells me that she doesn't think her momma will be with us much longer. So I decided that I had better make my way out to the Wilson farm sooner rather than later."

"Well, death has never been a good reason to rush into something like marriage. You got the whole future stretched out in front of you," I told him.

"You know you haven't been here long enough to see all the other ladies we have in Harpersville," said Redd.

"Are you saying that Miss Belle isn't good enough for me, Redd?"

"I'm not saying anything, son. I'm telling you one gentleman to another that you ought to be careful and don't let love blind you."

"You know a man stopped me on the street just the other day and told me that Clipper Wilson would set the schoolhouse on fire before he let me marry Belle. I told Belle and tears rolled down her pretty face."

"Well, being pretty ain't that important these days," said Old Lou.

"I think you should take another look at Miss Odelia and Miss Stokes. They are pretty too," said Redd. "They come to church every Sunday."

"How come we never see you at church?" I asked.

"Oh, that's because I don't believe in God."

"What! What do you mean you don't believe in God! Everybody believes in God."

"Well, not me. Not anymore."

"What did Miss Belle say when you told her about your beliefs?" I asked.

"Nothing."

"You know Clipper Wilson has been a church-going man for a long time," said Old Lou.

"A man like old Clipper Wilson is liable to hold that against you, if he doesn't shoot you first," said Redd.

"What do you mean, Redd? Belle said her daddy wouldn't mind my views on religion at all. In fact, she said he didn't believe half the things most folks in Harpersville believed anyway."

"That's because those Wilsons are peculiar human beings. They're not like the rest of us," said Old Lou.

"Well, I guess you'll know which side of the truth to believe sooner than later. Is that enough hair off the sides, Mr. Steel?" I asked him.

“This is exactly how Miss Belle likes it. She wants me to look my best from head to toe for her folks. She said she’d even make sure Mr. Wilson looked his best today too. How much do I owe you for your services, Albert?”

“It’s on the house.”

“You see any place else, they would have just taken your money. Around here, we give you something to think about for free. That’s important these days,” said Old Lou.

“You think about what we said and come to church sometimes because the end is near,” I told him.

“So I guess I shouldn’t be expecting old Clipper Wilson to come in and sweep hair today. It would be the first day he has missed in years,” I said.

“No, Albert, I don’t expect you will see him today,” said Redd.

Mr. Steel was long gone before Redd noticed he had left his eyeglasses. We didn’t waste any time trying to put words to the way we felt about Mr. Steel walking around without religion and dealing with those Wilsons. Old Lou said that if Mr. Steel was foolish enough not to believe in God and ask a Wilson woman for her hand in marriage in one lifetime then that was his problem. Redd figured trouble was sure to start out at Clipper’s farm and that the sheriff would be passing by with him in the car on the way to the jailhouse. But neither one of them waited around to see what would happen.

I swept the hair in the barbershop because I figured Clipper would not show up. Then I turned around towards the window. I saw him in front of the barbershop in a shirt and tie. He walked through the door. I didn’t move.

“I wasn’t expecting you today. I thought you’d be sitting up with Mr. Steel somewhere. Did he ask you if he could marry Belle?”

Clipper grabbed the broom out of my hand. He didn’t say a word.

“You know that Mr. Steel doesn’t believe in God. You wouldn’t want a man marrying your daughter if he doesn’t even believe in God.”

I watched him swept the hair in a neat pile.

“Of course, I tried to tell Mr. Steel that he wasn’t good enough for Belle. I bet it must’ve been a sight watching him beg you to let him marry her. But I would have said no if I were you. There is something peculiar about a man who doesn’t believe in God. Don’t you think I’m right, Clipper?”

He had finished sweeping the hair and placed the broom in the corner. He stared at me. For a while, there was no sound. Then Clipper walked over to the door and grabbed the knob.

“Don’t you think I’m right, Clipper?”

He didn’t say one word to me. His gaze almost knocked the wind out of me.

I watched him walk down the street, and I couldn’t help thinking how lost his soul was.

ASSIGNMENTS FOR DISCUSSION AND WRITING

Assignment #1

Claddie is involved in many conflicts. What conflicts can you identify? Why do you think no one told Claddie that Grandpa Zell could read? How does this revelation about Grandpa Zell change Claddie's view about himself?

Assignment #2

Some might argue that Phillips's story is more of a personal narrative than a short story. Determine if "The Chair by the Window" is a short story. What is the story's plot? Who are the characters and are they flat or dynamic? What is the theme of Phillips's story? Is Phillips's work a short story or a personal narrative?

Assignment #3

In Ernest Whipple's "The Barbershop," Albert, the owner, lets his perception of the past influence the way he sees people. Even though things around him have changed, Albert seems to resist change. What does this tell you about his character? Why is it important that the story takes place in a barbershop? Is the ending of the story appropriate or should it be rewritten?

Assignment #4

Whipple's story brings into play many complex issues, and he uses dialogue as a way to reveal the personalities of different characters in the barbershop and support the plot of the story. But as a short story, Whipple's work has many weaknesses. What are some of the weaknesses that you find? How would you improve Whipple's story in order to make it stronger? Are there any important writing tips that you can offer a writer who might be interested in writing a story like Whipple's?

Assignment #5

Find a short story by a writer that you admire. Read it. Study it. Then find at least one critical review of the story. What is the plot of the story? What does the critic say about the story? Why do you agree or disagree with the critic's comments? After reading the story and a critical review, explain why you would or would not recommend this story to someone else.

Assignment #6

Have you ever written a story? Using what you have learned about the elements of fiction, write your own short story. After you have written your short story, exchange it with one of your peers. Evaluate the story you received. What is the plot of the story? What are the story's strengths and weaknesses? Would you recommend this story to someone else? Why or why not?

THE POEM

The poem is another genre in creative writing. Unlike some genres, the poem has a history that spans many centuries. Poems are not written in prose like short stories. They are written in verse (lines that are usually grouped in stanzas). A poem's length can vary. However, most poems tend to be brief and complex. It is best to read them slowly and carefully. There are many different ways to write a poem. There are many elements of poetry that can prove to be useful in helping writers produce the most effective poem possible. Below is a description of four types of poetry and some of the elements of poetry that are helpful to know when reading and writing poems.

TYPES OF POEMS

There are many ways to distinguish poems. The four common ways poems are described are didactic, lyric, narrative, and dramatic. These descriptions help account for any historical and structural significance a poem might have.

The Didactic Poem

A didactic poem is a poem that relates a message, or it instructs or informs the reader about a particular subject.

The Lyric Poem

A lyric poem is usually a brief poem that relates an incident or the beliefs and emotions of one speaker. Lyric poems were originally written as poems that were to be accompanied by the lyre, a musical instrument used in Ancient Greece.

The Narrative Poem

A narrative poem is a poem that tells a story. Though it is brief, the narrative poem often shares many characteristics that are associated with fiction. A narrative poem may relate the story of an event, a person, or a particular setting.

The Dramatic Poem

A dramatic poem is a poem that usually employs the voice of a fictional narrator or narrators who address a particular audience. Sometimes, a dramatic poem is considered a speech written in verse, also called a dramatic monologue.

FORM

Form is the design of the words, sentences, lines, and stanzas in a poem. When a writer follows a formal or exact pattern, the design is called a **closed form**. A sonnet, a poem with fourteen lines, is an example of a poem with a closed form. When a poem does not have a formal pattern and uses a more liberal and innovative design, the design is called an **open form**. A poem written in blank or free verse is an example of a poem with an open form.

IMAGERY

Imagery is the visual picture that forms in the mind after one reads a word or a group of sentences. Imagery is not limited to sight. A writer can use words to create images that engage one's sense of sight, touch, hearing, or smell.

tone

Tone is the speaker's attitude toward a subject or particular audience. Like the tone of a human's voice, the language or word selection in a poem can be friendly and inviting or hostile and angry.

RHYTHM

Rhythm is the repetition of accents, or stresses, and pauses in a poem. A stress represents the amount of emphasis given to a particular syllable when one speaks. When a stressed syllable is the same, or fixed, throughout a poem, it is called **meter**. When a stressed syllable follows an unstressed syllable, the meter is called **iambic**.

RHYME

Rhyme occurs when words or phrases contain identical sounds. When the ending vowel and consonant sounds in words are the same, this is called an **exact rhyme**. When the rhyme scheme is slightly different, this is called **slant rhyme**. **Alliteration** is the succession or repetition of the same consonant sound at the beginning of words. **Assonance** is the repetition or succession of vowels sounds.

SIMILE

A simile is a figure of speech in which two things are compared using connective words such as like, as, or than. It is important to note that a simile is often used to emphasize similarities between things that are thought to be very different.

METAPHOR

A metaphor is a figure of speech in which a term or phrase is applied to something it is not in order to suggest a resemblance. Unlike a simile, metaphors do not use connective words but usually a form of the verb *to be*.

Sample #3

How Life Is

Pete Conner

Sometimes when I am happy, I remember
hearing my father's voice ringing in my ear.
And I see him sitting and staring and blowing
circles of smoke from a pipe.

I smile when I remember how we all cried
when the money for the mortgage disappeared again.
And the man from the bank knocked on the
door, but nobody moved.

Then the dog died.

And grandpa died.

Then Joe married a girl named Alice and moved
to Denver to sell washing machines.

Then Father O'Neil died.

And Governor Fanning died.

Then Billy put my father's shot gun in his mouth
for the last time.

And my mother sat in the hall closet for two days
before coming out and saying that she did not love us anymore.

Then Uncle Dowell died.

And my father died.

Then I grabbed a gun and a uniform and went off to Vietnam.

It was there that I realized that there was no real pleasure in living.

Sample #4

Maggie's Amen

Tina Walter Grant

at night,
i don't pray for love
anymore. nobody hears.
then somebody said i should become
a lady of fashion and wear
brighter dresses.
so i bought
all the fire red, electric blue
and sunshine yellow dresses that could
be found in a place like Pineville.

then Mr. ____ came along and he
told me jokes and grew tired from
reminding me when to laugh at them.

then, i thought, i should go out
and hear the boys in the band play
jazz at the Cotton.

there i met Mr. ____, who said
that he was already in love with
Gert, his trumpet.

then, i thought, that maybe love
didn't have anything to do with
prayers, dresses, or trumpets
after all.

so i packed what was left of me
in my momma's old suitcase
and left on a cold tuesday.

if i ever decided to come back,
they'd all see that i was
somebody different.

ASSIGNMENTS FOR DISCUSSION AND WRITING**Assignment #7**

The narrator in Pete Conner's poem invites readers to glimpse some of the tragic moments in his or her life. What type of tone does the narrator project? Does the form of the poem have any effect on the way the reader interprets the tone? What is the narrator trying to suggest to readers about life?

Assignment #8

Sometimes it is not easy to define a poem. "How Life Is" is a good example of a poem that could be defined as a narrative or a dramatic poem. What features make Conner's poem a narrative poem? What features make his poem dramatic? What does this suggest to you about the nature of trying to define a piece of writing?

Assignment #9

Maggie, the assumed narrator in Tina Walter Grant's poem, is searching for love and doesn't seem to find it in Pineville. Why does the narrator finally decide to leave? What do you think her revelation that love has nothing to do with prayers, dresses, or trumpets tells readers about her character? What is the significance of the title?

Assignment #10

Grant's narrator draws connections between things that most would consider different. The poem suggests that trumpets are like lovers and people are like clothes. Is this an effective use of simile or metaphor in Grant's work? How could she have used imagery more effectively in her poem? Does the use of all lowercase letters add more meaning to the poem?

Assignment #11

The poems "How Life Is" and "Maggie's Amen" might seem different, but they have much in common, if one examines them closely. What are some of the similarities you see? What are some of the differences? Which poem is better? Why?

Assignment #12

Find a poem by a writer that you admire. Read it. Study it. What do you think the poem means? How does the poem inspire you? Why would you recommend that someone read more of this author's poetry?

FORUM ONE

Q & A on Creative Writing**Q: HOW DO I GO ABOUT STARTING A WRITING CAREER?**

A: You will get many different answers to this question, depending on whom you ask. This is mine. I really don't know! There are so many different types of writing that cater to so many different audiences. I do know that you need to write something that some editor thinks is good enough for publication and hope that enough people will read it. If you want to teach until you achieve these things, then you have to consider getting the proper degree. Read David Starkey's article for more on this issue. It is listed in the bibliography. He will give you an idea of what you can expect.

Q: IS COLLEGE TEACHING A GOOD MEANS OF EARNING A LIVING FOR A WRITER?

A: It can be. It depends on many things. At most research universities, publishing is a major criterion for advancement in pay and rank. Smaller institutions tend to focus more on teaching and service and less on how much one publishes. You will need at least a Master's degree, a job offer, and luck. Most academic jobs are hard to come by. What happens after you get a job really depends on where you teach and what you write. At institutions where publishing is expected, you'll likely have a certain time period to publish a substantial body of work, contribute service to the community and the department, and acquire a good teaching record. Many people just assume this is an easy goal to achieve. Just because a person writes something great, it does not mean it will be published. I know many people who write and publish, and they do not have teaching jobs.

Q: WHAT CAN I DO TO IMPROVE MY WRITING?

A: Read and write! It is just that simple. People have been saying this for years, and it is solid advice. What does a would-be basketball player who dreams of playing in the NBA have to do? Practice. Practice what? Playing basketball. Now why should writing be any different? Read everything you can get your hands on. Read literature. Read philosophy. Read history. Everything. Acquire a better understanding of as many things as you can. You will be able to see things you could not see before. When you sit down to write, you will right the wrongs of the world by creating your own world. Read. Write. Think. Be happy. Eat good food. Live. Learn. Experience your own life. Imagine the lives of others, then use this to write wonderful stories and novels and essays and poems and plays and manifestos, encyclopedias, million-dollar proposals, etc.

Q: SHOULD I GO TO EUROPE TO WRITE?

A: If you have the money, yes. If you do not, then I suggest you stay close to home to write. I have never understood why people think they have to go to a different country to write. I bet you would never consider going half way around the globe to write a biology report that is due on Monday. When I visited Europe, it was nice. For a while, I thought there might be some truth to the leave-America hype. Then one day, I realized a European lunatic was no different from a lunatic in any other part of the world. You can change the language and the context, but humans are human wherever you go. This is why I tell students to just write. Stop thinking that you really need to move far away.

Q: HOW CAN I GET OVER WRITER'S BLOCK?

A: Watch the trucks pass. Cut the grass. Go to a baseball game. Cook for the person you love and wash the dishes afterwards. Fix the fence. In short, leave the writing and come back to it. Remember, critical thinking helps creativity, but I don't think critical thinking and creative thinking can operate at the same time. Sometimes, neither will work and that's the block. Get away from the writing, even if it is a memo. Start on something else. When you are ready, you will come back to it. Just leave it alone. This simple method keeps you from going crazy.

Q: WHAT IS A COPYRIGHT?

A: A copyright is the legal right to publish, market, or reproduce a work by a writer, artist, musician, etc. In most cases, you must acquire written permission to use copyrighted material. When a work is created, it is automatically copyrighted. However, it must be officially registered before you can bring a lawsuit against another for copyright infringement.

Q: CAN AN AGENT GET MY WORK PUBLISHED?

A: It will depend on many factors, and there is no way I can tell you all of them. It is likely that you will have to establish a name for yourself by publishing so that an agent can make you shine when it comes time to sell your work to an editor at a publishing house. You will have to find an agent. Then, you will have to find one who is trustworthy. Of course, you first need to write something good. This is the key. If the biography or romance novel you wrote is marketable, then a good agent might be helpful to you. But people have been known to publish things without agents. Advances in computer technology have made self-publishing very popular among writers. One must be careful when choosing this approach. There are many scams out there.

Q: SHOULD I PAY TO GET MY WORK PUBLISHED?

A: This method of publishing is often called vanity publishing. I wouldn't advise paying to get published. It carries an awful stigma in the publishing world. Self-publishing might be a better option. Of course, there are essay, poem, and story competitions that you can enter. The organizers usually ask for submission fees. This is the way organizers get the prize money for the winners of the competition. These competitions are mostly legitimate. Be careful and use common sense. Do not send money for anything unless you feel it is legitimate.

Q: WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY WORK IS REJECTED?

A: Cry. Sulk. Call a psychiatrist. Whatever. Then figure out how you want to revise, if you think the work needs revising. Then send it out again. Keep sending it out! One day somebody will publish your writing, and something else will be accepted. Then you will be on your way.

Q: HOW CAN I FIND OUT WHERE TO PUBLISH MY WRITING?

A: Go to a bookstore or the library and find *Novel and Short Story Writer's Market*, *Poets and Writers*, and other publications that cater to writers. Many listings will be in these publications. Most of these publications will also have websites that you can visit.



SECTION II

BUSINESS WRITING

THE MEMO

The term *memo* is the abbreviated version of the word *memorandum*, which is the Latin word that means something to be remembered. The memo is the most practical form of business correspondence. It allows parties within an organization to communicate informally. There are a variety of functions and formats for the memo. Primarily, the memo should be clear, concise, focused, correct, and functional. Below is a list of the parts of the memo and a description of three basic types of memos.

PARTS OF A MEMO

To
From
Subject
Date
Purpose
Summary (if appropriate)
Discussion (if appropriate)
Recommendations (if appropriate)

BASIC TYPES OF MEMOS

Response to Inquiry

This type of correspondence acts as a response to an inquiry. It provides the reader with information that has been requested from you. It is ideal to use creative document design strategies to help the reader access the information that he or she is most interested in knowing.

Trip Report

Though it is called a *trip report*, this type of correspondence usually takes the form of a memo. This type of correspondence provides the reader with information about the most important details of a business trip. You should provide the information you think the reader will be most interested in knowing.

Internal Proposal

This type of correspondence acts as an informal report that helps bring about a change within an organization so that it can benefit in some specific way. This type of proposal must demonstrate the writer's understanding of a problem and solutions that are efficient and cost-effective.

Sample #5

Griner, Farmer & Walsh Construction
1229 Saverton Valley Drive
Brunswick, Maine 04011
(207) 453-4563

MEMORANDUM

To: David Gonzalez
Head Foreman

Date: May 2, 2004

From: Janice James-Gere

Subject: New Site

Purpose

In the meeting on April 29, 2004, you suggested that I find a new location for our third construction project—PT #3. The purpose of this memo is to inform you that I have found a new location for the building: the vacant area next to Walleton's Lumber Company on Highway 13 West.

Summary

I inspected the property on May 1, 2004. I met Tess Ross, an agent at Sumpter Realty who represents Gary Thompson, the owner of the property. The site is located outside the city limits of Springfield. We can take advantage of the low traffic flow when having materials transported to and from construction sites. Being that the site is less than a mile away from Walleton's Lumber Company, we can now consider this company as a new supplier of lumber. We can save money on shipment charges because we can use our own supply trucks to haul the lumber to the site.

Discussion

I do have concerns about the amount of money that Gary Thompson wants for the property. According to Tess Ross, the ten acres is appraised at \$100,000, but this price is negotiable. When we consider the fact that our profits last year exceeded our expectations, the price for the Thompson property should not hurt us financially.

Recommendations

I have asked Ms. Ross to contact me on Thursday, May 12, 2004. Before this date, I would like to discuss this matter further. Possibly, we can all visit the property and arrange a meeting to discuss future plans.

Sample #6

SIMON & LINKS MEDICAL SUPPLY

TO: Sam Wong
DATE: September 12, 2005
SUBJECT: Physical Therapy
FROM: Ellen Gray

Purpose

The purpose of this memo is to provide you with the information you requested on physical therapy. I provide a brief description of physical therapy and list some references for further reading. Hopefully, this information will assist you in planning the proposal for the Nexus Project at St. Joseph's Hospital.

Physical Therapy

Physical Therapy is an area in the medical profession where specialists use various techniques and methods to assist people in rehabilitating themselves after serious injury. These specialists are called "Physical Therapists." Physical Therapists often help people to (re)learn how to use different parts of their bodies. The goal of most therapy sessions is to help people develop their motor skills by having them participate in various activities. Physical Therapists perform such duties at schools, clinics, hospitals, and nursing homes.

References

- Allen, M. (2002). *Opportunities in physical therapy*. New York: NMA.
- Babb, C. (2003). *Occupational therapy and physical therapy*. Lincoln, NE: Bell.
- Conner, J. (2001). *A guide for physical therapists*. San Francisco: MMAT.
- Kelly, A. (2000). *The years after injury*. Austin: Sutterton.

Sample #7

To: Iza Shahari, Southwest Regional Supervisor, Lincoln Industries
From: Sally Helman, Human Resources Specialist, Lincoln Branch Office #35
Subject: Proposal to Investigate Hiring Practices for Branch Offices #21 and #37
Date: January 12, 2004

Purpose

During our regional meeting in Austin, Texas, on December 12, 2003, you advised all Human Resources Specialists to submit a proposal to investigate the recent problems Lincoln Industries has had concerning its hiring practices at two significant branches of its chain of financial consulting firms. This memo describes a proposal to investigate the current hiring practices of support staff at Lincoln Branch Offices #21 in Oklahoma and Lincoln Branch Office #37 in Arkansas.

Summary of the Problem

Between 2001 and 2002, The Lincoln Employment Assessment Report shows that the rate of turnover for support staff at branch offices in Oklahoma and Arkansas was above 45%. This percentage is almost 55% higher than the turnover rates at branch offices in other regional locations. In fact, Lincoln Branch Office #45 in Maryland had an average turnover rate that was less than 5%. These percentages suggest that (1) there needs to be a re-evaluation of our job descriptions for our support staff and (2) there needs to be a more systematic way for Human Resources Specialists to monitor employee dissatisfaction.

Proposed Solutions

There are a few possible solutions to the problem of high turnover rates at branch offices #21 and #37. (1) The job descriptions for all support staff need to be revised. In the past, individual specialists have been responsible for writing their own job descriptions for their support staff. However, the financial managers that most staff workers assist have more sound job descriptions and evaluation procedures because they were set by the board. This principle should also be applied to support staff. As noted earlier, Lincoln Branch Office #45 had a low turnover rate. (2) Their practices might be the subject of a presentation at the next regional meeting in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in January 2005. Hopefully, this will be an informative session that allows other specialists to apply what they learn at their own branch offices.

Credentials and Qualifications

I have been a Human Resources Specialist for Lincoln Industries for twenty years. I have become increasingly familiar with the complexities that one encounters in such a position. As you know, I was formerly the Human Resources Specialist at the branch office in Maryland. Sue Rochell has been the specialist there for the last ten years. I know she would be more than happy to agree to help other specialists decrease their high turnover percentages.

Estimated Costs

The preparation for this project will not require any outstanding costs outside of monies designated for seminars and workshops. Although I cannot provide you with a list of these costs, Sue Rochell should be able to provide a better cost analysis.

References

Downs, Melvin. Hiring Practices in a Bull Market. New York: LAE, 2000.

Lions, Lester. The New Administrative Assistant. Boston: Russ, 2003.

Martini, Sal. Internal Business. Denton, TX: Associate, 2000.

Sangan, Tess. Women in the Workplace. New York: Hark, 2002.

ASSIGNMENTS FOR DISCUSSION AND WRITING

Assignment #13

You work for WELCO Industries (231 Longview Road, Carson, Illinois 62845). Your assistant manager is Daniel Murray. He sent you an email asking you to provide him with information. Mr. Murray wants to know your opinion on what charity to fund with the \$1000.00 surplus in the company's budget. Write a memo summarizing and discussing which charity you think should receive the money.

Assignment #14

Daniel Murray has approved the charity that you recommended, and he has requested that you begin preparing for a fifteen-minute presentation to familiarize the other employees with the charity. Because the conference room at WELCO Industries is still being renovated, Mr. Murray wants you to find a new location for your professional presentation. Murray requests that you submit a trip report to him, including directions and a list of alternative locations.

Assignment #15

WELCO Industries has had problems with employees arriving late to work and having fellow employees log their identification numbers into the time clock to disguise absence. Write an internal proposal to Daniel Murray discussing and summarizing the problem. Recommend solutions to the problem and how your expertise might be instrumental in the resolution. Be sure to include a list of references.