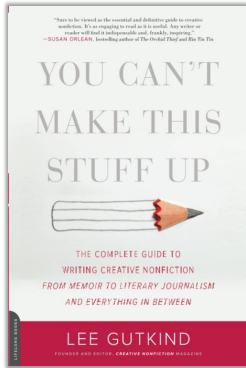
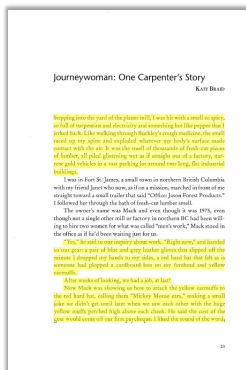


Writing Creative Non-Fiction and Memoir



- Unit 1a: What Is Creative Non-Fiction?
- Unit 1b: The Truthfulness of CNF
- Unit 1c: Ten Writing Recommendations
- Unit 2a: Types of Creative Non-Fiction
- Unit 2b: Research and Immersion
- Unit 2c: Narrative and Narrators
- Unit 3a: Reading and Readers
- Unit 3b: Scenes
- Unit 3c: Information
- Unit 4a: Recreation and Reconstruction
- Unit 4b: Hook, Frame, and Focus
- Unit 4c: Revising Creative Non-Fiction

The Highlighting Test



“... take a yellow highlighter and ... Highlight the scenes [of a creative non-fiction work] with yellow, just the scenes, large and small, from start to finish. Then return to the beginning and review your handiwork. Chances are, anywhere from 50 to 70 percent of each ... excerpt you selected will be full of yellow blocks.... And why is that? Because the building blocks of creative non-fiction are little scenes or stories. The best and most successful work is constructed that way” (Gutkind 107).

Telling vs Showing

telling

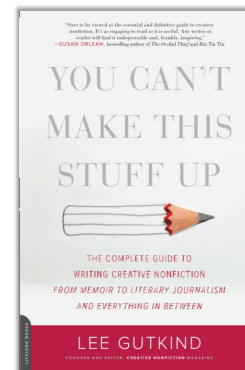
- “The lazy, uninspired [creative non-fiction] writer will *tell* the reader about a subject, place, or personality” (Gutkind 106).

showing

- “The [effective] creative non-fiction writer will *show* that subject, place, or personality, vividly, memorably—and in action” (Gutkind 106).

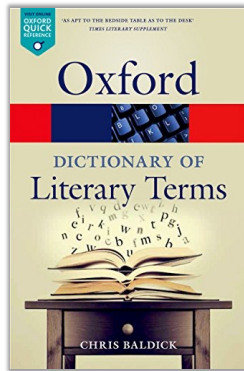
Creative non-fiction writers should always be conscious of *showing* their subjects to the reader rather than merely *telling* their subjects to the reader. In other words, they should write in *scenes*. Gutkind elaborates, “Just like the old cliché, ‘a picture speaks a thousand words,’ a good real-life scene can show readers an aspect of character and personality that a writer could never achieve [simply] by telling it” (Gutkind 113).

Some Elements of Scenes



- **action:** something always happens, preferably involving tension and suspense (114-16)
- **narrative:** contains a beginning, a middle, and an end to help lend rhythm and coherence (119-22)
- **dialogue:** people speaking to each other realistically, to lend a cinematic quality and to increase verisimilitude (122-23)
- **intimate details:** contains details, images readers may not easily visualize on their own, often as metaphors for larger truths (127)

verisimilitude



- the semblance of truth or reality in a work, or the literary principle that requires a consistent illusion of truth to life in a work
- term covers both the exclusion of improbabilities (as in *realism* and *naturalism*) and the careful disguising of improbabilities in non-realistic works
- originates in Aristotle's concept of *mimesis*, or imitation of nature (Baldick 375)

📖 Author Biographies

Kate Braid

- writer and editor of personal essays and other creative non-fiction works
- has also written numerous prize-winning collections of poetry
- co-edited with Sandy Shreve *In Fine Form*, an anthology of Canadian form poetry
- "Journeywoman" is part of a longer memoir about her fifteen years in construction (387-88)

www.katebraid.com

Evelyn Lau

- Vancouver-based writer and poet
- has published more than ten books, including works of non-fiction
- published *Runaway: Diary of a Street Kid* (1989) when she was eighteen; it became a bestseller
- *Runaway* was later made into CBC television movie (1994)
- winner of several Western Magazine Awards for her writing

📖 Kate Braid,

"Journeywoman: One Carpenter's Story"

action narrative dialogue intimate details

beginning Then I forgot everything as I concentrated on checking each mark, getting the unwieldy lengths to go on the cart where I wanted them, one at a time, slowly. My watch must have stopped, I thought, because surely it was more than thirty minutes later when I noticed the entire back end of the chain—my end—full of lumber piled three and four pieces high while wood continued to flood down in an alarming blue and yellow torrent. I waved at Janet in pantomime, pointing at the pile. Janet gestured absently towards her ear with the too-large glove and clearly mouthed the word, "Damn."

middle Then we both bent over, working harder and faster, but we couldn't catch up. We kept forgetting which mark went where. The wood wouldn't lie straight on the piles. I got my pieces crossed with Janet's and when a cart was over half full, it took too much energy to lift each log to the top. Soon, on the edge of tears, I found myself pointlessly daubing at the mark on the end of a piece of wood with a thickly gloved hand as if brushing aside snow.

end Then, with a long scream, the entire chain ground to a halt. (26)

📖 Evelyn Lau, "Healer"

telling

- "I remember giving him one pill after another" (157)
- "I was eighteen; he was middle-aged" (159)
- "they slept in separate rooms, passed each other silently in the hall" (159)
- "He was a psychiatrist" (160)
- "I was ... working on a phone-sex line" (160)
- "he was thirty years older" (162)

showing

- "Part of me was waiting for rescue; when the police had come I thought that was what they would do. They would put an end to everything the way I had not been able to" (158)
- "every time I opened my eyes and wished someone would walk in and put a stop to this" (161)
- "I wanted her to acknowledge what was happening, but instead she glared at me as if I were the one leading him astray" (162)

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