Creative Writing Without the Pain of Grammar:
A Sourcebook for CW 10

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The moment I was asked to submit a proposal for the General Education (G.E.) Professorial Chair Award that I got in 2005, I already knew what I wanted to work on. For a tentative title, I wrote down, "Addressing Grammar and Composition Problems in a G.E. Creative Writing Class." It was my first semester to teach the fairly new Revitalized General Education Program (RGEP) course of CW 10, the course on Creative Writing for Beginners. Teaching this course would prove to be a challenge since it could be taken by anyone at anytime, without the prerequisites of an English grammar or composition class.

This sourcebook integrates brief discussions of grammar points and composition guides with the creative writing exercises. The coverage of the book generally follows the topics in the syllabus for CW 10. The format for presenting each lesson is composed of four sections: 1) some background or helpful information on the craft of writing, 2) a warm-up activity in the form of a suggested journal entry, of a ten-minute seatwork, or of a group activity, 3) a creative writing exercise to be done and submitted individually, and 4) some language or grammar trivia. Each lesson may be either introduced by or followed-up with a reading selection that models the writing technique, literary element, or genre in focus.

This sourcebook may be used as a teacher's manual or a student workbook. The number of writing activities is enough to cover a semester's worth of requirements. The contents are as follows:

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THE DIAGNOSTIC PARAGRAPH

Ask your students to choose one of the following sentence stems (a.k.a. paragraph prompts) and discuss it in a short paragraph of 7 to 10 sentences.

1. If I were a literary piece, I would be a _____.

(State the genre, such as a poem, a short story, a novel, or a play. You may be more specific about what type, such as a haiku, a funny anecdote, a suspense thriller, or a fairytale. You may even want to identify an exact title or work by your favorite author.)

2. Creative writing is just like _____.

3. For me, the greatest literary masterpiece of all time is _____.

4. The work of a creative writer involves _____.

5. While on my way to CW 10 class, I _____.

The point of a diagnostic paragraph in CW10 is to find out as early as possible how imaginative your students are. There will be common, standard, predictable answers. But there will also be answers that are fresh and that hint at some creative potential. Of course, the diagnostic paragraph may also reveal some rough spots in grammar and rhetoric.

Using modified cloze tests can also be a fun way to challenge the imagination and at the same time, test language competence and comprehension.

Ask the students to fill in the blanks of the following paragraph.

Last _____, I decided to _____ at a nearby _____. The morning seemed _____ when all of the sudden a _____ crossed my path and _____. There was nothing else I could do but _____ because _____. Fortunately, _____ arrived to _____. At the end of the day, I thought _____.

THE WRITER'S JOURNAL

The writer's journal or notebook is different from a regular diary. Instead of being filled with summaries of the events of the day or with emotion-laden revelations, the writer's journal focuses on the depth of these experiences and how they can actually be seeds of an idea for future creative works. To put it bluntly, this kind of journal isn't all about the writer. It's more about the craft—or preparations for the creative work.

Journal writing is a way to brainstorm ideas for a story or poem. It is part of prewriting.

Here are some examples of journal entries:

1. trigger lines, prompts, or sentence stems
   - If I had three wishes...
   - The most obnoxious people on earth are...
   - The cold North Wind blew in and...

2. lists, catalogs, or inventories
   - Most embarrassing moments
   - Funniest pick-up lines
   - Lame excuses for being absent

3. free writing

4. letter-writing
   - Dear God
   - To my dearest enemy
   - For Mother Earth

5. snippets of ideas for a story or poem
   - a running dialogue
   - an unusual title
   - interesting, new words

6. clippings of interesting pictures or photographs
   (Provide captions or possible stories behind each photo.)

WRITING AS AN EXPRESSION OF THE SENSES

Main Lesson: Imagery

Imagery refers to descriptive details or elements in a written work that appeal to or are perceivable by the senses. A person is said to have five senses, namely: 1) sight (a.k.a. the visual sense), 2) hearing (a.k.a. the auditory sense), 3) smell (a.k.a. the olfactory sense), 4) touch (a.k.a. the tactile sense), and 5) taste (a.k.a. the gustatory sense). You may add movement (a.k.a. kinesics) to complete the definition of imagery. *While you're at it, why not add as many more senses that you can think of—a sixth sense, common sense, sense of humor, nonsense, sensibility, etc.*

Warm-up Activity: Five Ways of Looking

This group activity is based on the poem, "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird" by Wallace Stevens.

To prepare the students for this poem, give a brief description of another kind of poem called the haiku. It is a Japanese three-line poem of usually 17 syllables. State that its Zen-like principle is to encourage meditation and reflection on the qualities of an object by trimming down the view to its barest essentials.

Wallace Stevens' long poem simulates the effect of a haiku that captures or freezes a scene and then describes details that an observer would otherwise overlook. It is divided into 13 short stanzas, all of which present a different view of a blackbird. Some stanzas are easy to understand because they literally describe characteristics of or actions done by a blackbird in a particular setting. Other stanzas are more difficult to grasp because of the abstract contexts against which the blackbird is set. For the purpose of this exercise, only five stanzas will be used to illustrate the activity.

I.
Among twenty snowy mountains,
The only moving thing
Was the eye of the blackbird.

II.
I was of three minds,
Like a tree
In which there are three blackbirds.

III.
The blackbird whirled in the autumn winds.
It was a small part of the pantomime.

IV.
A man and a woman
Are one.
A man and a woman and a blackbird
Are one.

XII.
The river is moving.
The blackbird must be flying.

As a main activity, divide the class into five groups. Assign different topics to each group (e.g., an earthworm, my mother's hands, a bath sponge, Kris Aquino, Manila Bay). Provide copies of the five stanzas chosen, but with several words replaced by blanks. Ask each group to fill in the blanks with the required word/s related to the topic assigned. All of the five stanzas, therefore, are various ways of looking at the same topic.

I.
Among _____ _____ _____,
a number *adjective* *plural noun*

The only moving thing

Was _____.
noun phrase

II.
I was _____,
any kind of phrase

Like a _____
noun

In which _____.
any kind of clause

III.
The _____ _____ _____.
noun *past tense verb* *prepositional phrase*

It was _____.
any kind of phrase

IV.
_____ and _____
noun *noun*

Are one.
_____ and _____ and _____
noun *noun* *noun*

Are one.

XII.
The _____ is _____.
noun *verb + ing*

The _____ must be _____.
noun *verb + ing*

The format of this exercise is like a modified cloze test. Even previous to distributing the worksheets, the students may be asked to identify the required contents of each blank by checking on the items in the poem. Incidental discussions may be on the identification of the parts of speech based on their form, function, or syntactic placement in the poem. Also discuss the difference between a phrase and a clause.

Once the groups have composed all five stanzas on their topic, they may read these out in class.

An added challenge to this activity is to require each stanza to correspond to a specific sense (i.e., sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch, movement) that further describes the features of the assigned topic. For instance, what does the blackbird look like? What sound does it make? What smells are associated with it? What does it eat? What do its feathers feel like? How does it fly?

Creative Writing Exercise: Unusual Imagery

Describe further the following imageries by using the other senses *not* often associated with each. You may add movement or kinesics to the alternative descriptions of each item. After making a list of the alternative ways to describe each item, integrate these into a unified, coherent paragraph of description. The commonly associated sense for each item is already provided.

eg., a deep red sunset (sight) – classical music (hearing), musk scent (smell), bittersweet coffee (taste), satin blankets (touch), slow-swaying hips (movement)

Set A:
1. the color purple or violet (sight)
2. rain pouring on the rooftops (hearing)
3. rose-scented perfume (smell)
4. dried-up leaves (touch)
5. peppermint candy (taste)

Set B:
1. Christmas lights
2. a police siren
3. rotting garbage
4. sandpaper
5. calamansi juice

Language Trivia: Describers and Classifiers

When asked to describe something, writers usually resort to adding modifiers, such as adjectives and adverbs, in their composition. These words are also called describers and classifiers.

Describers tell about the quality of a thing or of the speaker's attitude toward the thing. eg., an *expensive* car (quality); that *terrible* day(attitude)
Describers can also come in the form of noun group heads.
eg., *The poor* need help.

Classifiers are words that subclassify or label a thing. (eg., *assistant* registrar) Classifiers can be adjectives (*urban* growth), nouns (*city* girl), or participles (*living* organisms; *developed* economy).

All describers precede classifiers. (eg., an impressive, state-of-the art, computer technology)

WRITING AS EXPRESSION OF FEELINGS

Main Lesson: Creative Nonfiction

Creative or literary nonfiction is sometimes also labeled as the personal essay or the memoir. This essay may be any or a combination of basic forms of writing, such as expository, descriptive, narrative, persuasive, or argumentative forms of discourse. According to a reference book on imaginative writing, the creative non-fictionist "employs the diligence of a reporter or researcher, the shifting voices and viewpoints of a novelist, the refined wordplay of a poet, and the analytical mode of an essayist." This kind of essay should have purpose and meaning beyond the experiences related by the writer.

More specifically, the personal essay has its origin in something that happened in the writer's life but it places emphasis on the author's speculation, reflection, or meditation on the event. There is an implied relationship between the writer and the reader as it is conversational in nature—from me to you. There is a balance between dramatization, like in a story, and overt reflection, like in an essay.

Warm-up Activity: Tell Me How You Feel

This is a ten-minute seatwork to set the mood in class. Give a couple of situations and ask the students to write down their initial reactions or feelings per situation. Then ask them to narrate what they would do to handle the situation.

1. You rode the IKOT jeep in a hurry to get to a 7:00 a.m. class. Then you discover that you don't have any loose change. All you have in your wallet is a P1,000 bill. The jeep is filled with passengers but you don't know anyone.

2. You studied hard for a mid-term exam in Math 17. It took you a week's worth of late nights to finally answer the review questions. On the day of the exam, the teacher announces that the test is postponed for next week.

3. You have been working on a group thesis with two other batchmates. After a semester of doing fieldwork and collecting data, you are now ready to write the paper. All of the information is stored in your computer. Then, one night, your computer crashes.

Creative Writing Exercise: How Your Body Talks/Dressing Up Emotions

List down a number of words or phrases to describe feelings or emotions that you have experienced. Then, choose one pleasant and one unpleasant feeling. Describe each emotion in a paragraph of 5 to 7 sentences each. The description must focus on how your body manifests

these feelings. You may include the manner by which you act, talk, think, or even dress up. *Do not*, at any time, mention the word corresponding to the emotion being described.

Example A:
Pleasant – the anticipation of a first date
Unpleasant – the anxiety of waiting for news from a disaster area

Example B:
Pleasant – sheer contentment
Unpleasant – envy

Language Trivia: Hyponymy and Vocabulary-building

"Words cannot express how much you mean to me...." This is a line often found in lyrics of songs or in greeting cards. The truth, however, is that a good writer will be able to express exactly what he or she is feeling and thinking through the careful and purposeful choice of words. In writing, this is called good diction. A well thought-out combination of word choice and syntax coveys not just information but meaning and emotional impact.

Try making a list of more specific ways to express a common thing, be it a place, color, an act, or a feeling.

1. vacation spots: a beach resort, a mountain lodge, a lakeside cabin, a picnic grove
2. reds: scarlet, maroon, ruby, crimson, vermilion, cherry, burgundy, wine
3. to walk: trudge, limp, saunter, glide, waddle, tiptoe, march, hike, amble
4. happy: content, delighted, ecstatic, thrilled, cheerful, overjoyed, jubilant

WRITING AS DISCIPLINE

Main Lesson: Language and Style

There can be many voices heard by the reader of a literary piece. Author's voice refers to the "thumbprint" of a certain writer, a recognizable style or tone. A writer, though, may take on different voices depending on the piece being written.

Persona is the voice that a reader hears speaking in the work. It is the "I" of a creative work, the mask adopted by the author.

Character voice is the manner of speaking given to characters in a story. It is a chosen mimicry that further reveals the inner characters through their dialogue.

Warm-up Activity: Talking Pictures

Choose two sets of pictures with a group of people in them, preferably a group of not less than four people in the picture. Divide the class into two groups. Ask each group to choose any of the

two pictures for the activity but they should not let the other group know what they have chosen.

Let each group establish the scenario of the picture they have chosen. They should discuss the following points:

1. Who are these people? Consider their ages, sex, culture, social status, etc.
2. Where are they? What time of day or what season/era is it?
3. What are they doing?
4. What could they be talking about?

To answer the last question, the group must compose a short conversation among the people in the picture. Let at least 3 of these persons engage in a conversation. Limit the conversation to 7-10 exchanges of dialogue.

Creative Writing Exercise: Listen to Me

Each of the following characters would like to ask for something from someone. Write down a short *monologue* of how each of them would plead their case.

	CHARACTER	THING ASKED FOR	FROM WHOM
1.	a preschooler	a new box of crayons	a teacher
2.	a teenager	some mall money	a parent
3.	a junior executive	a salary raise	the boss
4.	a homemaker	a higher grocery budget	the spouse
5.	a spurned lover	a second chance	the romantic partner

Note: The writer should decide on the language style and length of each monologue.

Language Trivia: Not Saying It Like It Is

The four kinds of sentences, according to their purpose or function, are:

1. declarative -- usually a statement of information, fact, or opinion
2. interrogative -- a question
3. imperative -- a command or request
4. exclamatory -- an expression of shock or surprise

Although these sentences are often also identified by their end punctuation (the period, the question mark, the exclamation point), sometimes the speaker could have more than one purpose for saying them. This is known as the illocutionary force of a speech act.

eg., stated: It's getting hot in here. (declarative)
Don't you feel warm? (interrogative)
real message: Please turn on the fan. (imperative)

ELEMENTS OF FICTION

Main Lesson: Plot

The traditional structure of plot begins with an exposition, followed by a rising action caused by the development of conflict, reaching a climax or turning point in the story, and tapering off in the falling action or denouement.

Warm-up Activity: Tales from the Nursery

Compose a short narrative paragraph out of each nursery rhyme.

1. Jack and Jill went up the hill
   To fetch a pail of water.
   Jack fell down and broke his crown
   And Jill came tumbling after.

2. Little Miss Muffet sat on a tuffet
   Eating her curds and whey.
   Along came a spider who sat down beside her,
   And frightened Miss Muffet away.

3. This little pig went to market;
   This little pig stayed at home;
   This little pig had roast beef;
   This little pig had none;
   And this little pig cried, "Wee, wee, wee!"
   All the way home.

4. Hey diddle, diddle, the cat and the fiddle;
   The cow jumped over the moon.
   The little dog laughed to see such sport,
   And the dish ran away with the spoon.

5. Peter, Peter, pumpkin eater,
   Had a wife and couldn't keep her.
   He put her in a pumpkin shell,
   And there he kept her very well.

Creative Writing Exercise: Stripping Stories

Using a wordless comic strip or a spot cartoon, compose a short narrative paragraph based on the place and characters found in the cartoon. A more challenging variation of this exercise is to cut out wordless cartoon frames from different comic strips and lay them out side by side, in a narrative sequence.

Language Trivia: Six Basic Ways of Punctuating Clauses
(Source: *The Least You Should Know About English, 92)*

I gave a party. Everybody came. (two independent clauses)
I gave a party; everybody came.

I gave a party; moreover, everybody came.	(two independent clauses connected by a word such as *also, consequently, finally, furthermore, however, likewise, moreover, nevertheless, otherwise, therefore, then, thus)*
I gave a party, and everybody came.	(two independent clauses connected by *and, but, for, or, nor, yet, so)*
When I gave a party, everybody came.	(dependent clause at the beginning of sentence)
Everybody came when I gave a party.	(dependent clause at end of sentence)
	The words that begin dependent clauses are *after, although, as, as if, because, before, even if, even though, ever since, how, if, in order that, since, so that, than, that, though, unless, until, what, whatever, when, whenever, where, whereas, wherever, whether, which, whichever, while, who, whom, whose, why.*

ELEMENTS OF FICTION

Main Lesson: Character

The most common and effective ways by which to present a character in a story are:

1) through appearance or physical description;
2) through speech or dialogue;
3) through action; and
4) through the thoughts and feelings of the character.

It helps to further flesh out character in pre-writing by using a character worksheet (much like a bio-data). Even if you will not include all the information on the worksheet in your story, it helps to make the character more real. You may include standard bio-data like the name, birth date or birth sign, height, weight, and also more information, like favorite hang-out, least liked school subject, dream car, etc. You can also write down the things the character is most likely to say in given situations, such as when someone cuts in front of the line, when asked for an excuse for tardiness in class, or when called to claim the grand prize in a raffle.

Warm-up Activity: Guess Whose?

Ask the students to guess "Who owns these things in the box?" Let them explain their answers.

Box A:	an iPod spearmint gum hand sanitizer a cellphone with camera a pair of muddy leather boots
Box B:	a tube of sunblock lotion a pair of sunglasses a plain, white T-shirt

a backpack
a magnetic compass

Box C: a roll of scotchtape
a ballpoint pen
a steno notebook
3 zip-lock sandwich bags
baby powder

Note: A variation of this activity is to choose 3 students from the class. Ask them to step out of the room, away from sight of the class. Give each one a shoebox or grocery bag. Let each student put 5 things that they own in the box/bag. Then, let these 3 students exchange boxes/bags among themselves, at random. Ask them to go back into the room and line up in front of the class. Let each one bring out the things from his/her box/bag. Then ask the class to match each set of things with the right owner.

The class (or a representative of the class) must explain their matches. (Perhaps some of the things hint at a personality trait or characteristic of their classmate.)

Creative Writing Exercise: Help Wanted

Write a character profile for a person whom you think best fits each job description. The character profile must include physical attributes, educational background or professional training, special skills or talents, personality traits, etc.

1. a call-center operator of Santa Claus' North Pole toy factory
2. a proxy for students who do not want to attend classes regularly
3. a babysitter of a 20-foot anaconda
4. an entertainer of an infamous dictator of a country
5. a teacher of 34 children of various ages who live in a remote mountain village

Language Trivia: It's not Sexy to be Sexist
(Source: adapted from *Random House English Language Desk Reference*, 85-87)

Politically-correct language or gender-sensitive language are ways by which writers try to avoid sexist labels in their works. There may be cases where writers resort to sexism in language, only if the plot or character calls for it. Otherwise, here are some suggestions on how to avoid sexist language.

1. Replace *man* or *men*, in words that are intended to refer to a person of either sex or to include members of both sexes.
   eg., Instead of *man*, *mankind*, or *man-made*, use *person*, *society*, or *synthetic*, respectively.

2. Use gender-neutral terms to designate occupations, positions, roles, etc. rather than terms that specify sex.
   eg., Instead of *businessman*, *housewife*, *salesman*, or *stewardess*, use *entrepreneur*, *homemaker*, *sales representative*, or *flight attendant*, respectively.

3. Refer to members of both sexes by parallel terms, names, or titles.
   eg., Instead of *man and wife*, *men and girls*, *Mr. Arroyo and Gloria*, use *man and woman* or *husband and wife*, *men and women* or *boys and girls*, *Mr. and Mrs. Arroyo* or *Miguel and Gloria*, respectively.

4. Avoid the third person singular masculine pronoun when referring to an individual who could be of either sex. Rephrasing the sentence will circumvent this situation.
   eg., *When a reporter covers a controversial story, he has a responsibility to present both sides of the issue.*
   When reporters cover a controversial story, they have....
   As reporters covering a controversial story, we have....
   When a reporter covers a controversial story, he or she has....
   When covering a controversial story, a reporter has....
   A reporter who covers a controversial story has....

5. Avoid language that disparages, stereotypes, or patronizes either sex.
   eg., *the fair sex, the little woman, a spinster, an old maid, a bitch, babe, chick, a jock, faggot, he-man, hunk, jerk, geek, bum, bloke*

ELEMENTS OF FICTION

Main Lesson: Dialogue

One of the more difficult things to handle in dialogue is to strike a balance between providing enough detail to move the story along and leaving just enough unsaid so that the conversation or the action that follows does not get too predictable.

Warm-up Activity: Missing Middle

Provided are an opening statement and a closing statement in a conversation between two people. Decide on who and what kind of characters they are. Figure out what the topic of conversation is. Fill in the missing middle of this dialogue. You are allowed a maximum of 10 dialogue lines/exchanges, not including the opening and closing statements.

Do not put "director's notes" nor parenthetical comments.

Set A: start: "I have to tell you something."
end: "Let's leave it at that."

Set B: start: "Oh, my God!"
end: "There's nothing else that can be done."

Creative Writing Exercise: Alone in the Middle

This time, provide beginning/previous and concluding/succeeding dialogue lines for 2 people. Situate this line, "But I don't care what they say!" anywhere within the conversation.

You have a maximum of 10 exchanges of lines, including this middle statement.

Language Trivia: Quotable Quotes

Good writing includes the proper way of submitting one's manuscript. A badly typed-out manuscript is not attractive; people may not make the effort to read it at all.

One of the difficulties in typing a manuscript is the dialogue paragraph. Know when and how to correctly type the quotation marks. Observe the proper mechanics of punctuation.

Put quotation marks around the exact words of a speaker (but not around an indirect quotation).

She said, "I'll go." (her exact words)
She said that she would go. (not her exact words)

Whenever *that* precedes the words of a speaker (as in the last example), it indicates that the words are not a direct quotation and should not have quotation marks around them.

If the speaker says more than one sentence, quotation marks are used only before and after the entire speech.

She said, "I'm ready. I'll be there in a minute. Don't go without me."

The words telling who is speaking are set off with a comma unless, of course, a question mark or exclamation mark is needed.

"I'm ready," she said.
"Come here!" she shouted.

Every quotation begins with a capital letter, but if a quotation is broken, the second part doesn't begin with a capital unless it's a new sentence.

"The best way out," wrote Robert Frost, "is always through."
"People always get what they ask for," wrote Aldous Huxley. "The only trouble is that they never know, until they get it, what it actually is that they have asked for."

Begin a new paragraph with each change of speaker.

"Let's try some Carl Rogers psychology," he said.
"Do you mean his idea about stating the other person's opinion?" she asked.
"That's right," he said.

Put quotation marks around the name of a story, poem, song, essay, TV program, radio program, or other short work. For longer works such as books, newspapers, magazines, plays, or movies, use underlining, which means they would be italicized in print.

Have you seen the movie *Broadcast News*?
In our short story class we read James Joyce's "Eveline," which is found in his book *Dubliners*.
Do you read *National Geographic* magazine?

ELEMENTS OF FICTION

Main Lesson: Point of View

The point of view in a story is the vantage point from where the story is being told. *Who is standing where to watch the scene?* Things to consider here are the voice of the teller, the intended listener, and the distance or closeness of both the action and the diction. Point of view also considers the distance (level of familiarity or strangeness) between the author/reader and the characters.

1. first person -- as central narrator (the "I" is telling the story)
   -- as peripheral narrator (the "I" is someone on the edge of the action but who acts as the reader's eyes and ears)

2. second person -- the "you" (reader) is considered as a character
   -- the "you" (reader) is involved in the actions of the story

3. third person -- as omniscient or all-knowing about time frames and characters' thoughts
   -- as limited omniscient who may enter the mind of some characters and also observe from the outside
   -- as objective who can be a "person" observing the scene but not knowing the characters' thoughts

Warm-up Activity: Twice-told Tales

Consider the well-known fairy tale of "Little Red Riding Hood." This fairy tale is often told in the third person, objective point of view. Retell the story by using the first person point of view of the different characters in the story:

1. Little Red Riding Hood
2. the wolf
3. her mother
4. her grandmother
5. the hunter/woodcutter

You may add or elaborate on some details in the fairytale.

Creative Writing Exercise: Do I Make Myself Clear?

In a spiel of 8 sentences or even less, discuss the following topics with the identified listener. Consider personal and relationship factors in your answers.

1. Convince your grandmother to attend the rock concert of Aerosmith with you.
2. Explain to your 6-year old brother, how babies are made.
3. Describe the color orange to a friend who was born blind.
4. Attempt to sell one-year's supply of herbal hair-dye to a bald man.
5. Befriend a Martian who is about to zap you with a thousand-watt laser gun.

Then, compose a brief reply or response by the person/character that you talked to.

Language Trivia: Up Close and Personal

The case of a word is a special form of the word used to show if it is a subject, object, or possessive. English personal pronouns have 3 cases.

Personal pronouns are used in the nominative case when they are subjects or when they follow linking verbs. (I, you, he, she, it, we, you, they)

eg., as subject -- *I* washed the dishes this morning.
eg., after linking verb -- This is *she*.

Personal pronouns are used in the objective case when they are direct or indirect objects of verbs, or when they are objects of prepositions. (me, you, him, her, it, us, you, them)

eg., as direct object -- The lady took *it*.
eg., as indirect object -- Jenny gave *him* the letter.

eg., as object of preposition -- Angels in heaven are watching over *us*.

Personal pronouns are used in the possessive case to show ownership or possession. Such pronouns can be used like adjectives to modify nouns (my, your, his, her, its, our, your, their), or like nouns, as subjects of verbs, predicate words, or objects of verbs or prepositions (mine, yours, his, hers, its, ours, yours, theirs).

eg., as noun modifier -- *Their* money was spent on luxuries.
eg., as subject of verb -- *Yours* is the best project.
eg., as predicate word -- That house will be *mine*.
eg., as object of verb -- Gina can't find *hers*.
eg., as object of preposition -- Base your research on *ours*.

ELEMENTS OF FICTION

Main Lesson: Setting

A basic formula to remember is: setting = scene (time + place) + mood/atmosphere.

For example, the combination of a time like "midnight" and a place like "a Gothic cemetery" has a natural resulting atmosphere that is "eerie or scary". This could be the static backdrop of a novel on Dracula.

Unusual or unexpected details, however, may be added. Setting, then, becomes more dynamic and ceases to be a mere introduction or decoration in the story. In our example, the cemetery at night could be "invaded" by a group of teen-age Halloween revelers who bring their class party to an authentic setting, thus waking up the dead, both in a literal and figurative way. The niches could be lined with lanterns and the tombs laden with food.

Setting can also be treated like a character if it is made "to do things" in the story or to the character that create tension or conflict. For instance, a stubborn wind in the UP Sunken

Garden messes up the hair of students and whips up a storm of loose sheets of xeroxed hand-outs.

Warm-up Activity: Once Upon a Time

In a short paragraph of narration-description, suggest a story concept or propose a possible storyline for the following settings:

1. the night of a full moon in a Gothic graveyard
2. noontime at the school cafeteria
3. late afternoon at the UP lagoon
4. a week-end of "back-to-school" sale at the mall
5. sunrise on the peak of Mt. Pulag

Creative Writing Exercise: Setting as Character

Write a short paragraph using each particular setting as a kind-of character in this scene. Do not include persons in your composition. Rather, let the details in the setting do things.

Use the given trigger-line of a character-setting to begin your paragraph. Keep your narrative paragraph short, meaning not more than 10 sentences.

1. The forests, somber and dull, stood motionless and silent on each side of the broad stream.

   "The Lagoon" by Joseph Conrad

2. The farm buildings huddled like little clinging aphids on the mountain skirts, crouched low to the ground as though the wind might blow them into the sea.

   "Flight" by John Steinbeck

3. The family cemetery had been a pleasant small neglected garden of tangled rose bushes and ragged cedar trees and cypress, the simple flat stones rising out of uncropped sweet-smelling wild grass.

   "The Grave" by Katherine Ann Porter

4. The horizon narrowed and widened, dipped and rose, and at all times its edge was jagged with waves that seemed thrust up in points like rocks.

   "The Open Boat" by Stephen Crane

5. A verandah with potted plants and an over-hanging bougainvillea vine ran along the full length of the house.

   "When the Rainbow Goddess Wept" by Cecilia Manguerra Brainard

Language Trivia: Figuring Out Figurative Language

Imaginative writing will involve a lot of comparisons between and among things to help concretize and describe what the writer wants to build up. A common device used is comparison by figures of speech.

Figuratively speaking, the elements being compared do not belong to the same classification otherwise, it becomes plain comparison. Note the differences:

Rebecca is a pretty as Rosa. (both are girls)

This is a literal comparison only.

Rebecca is as pretty as a rose. (one is a girl while the other is a plant)

More specifically, this is a *simile* because the comparison is explicitly stated through the use of *as...as*, or *like*.

Rebecca is a rose.

This is a *metaphor* because the comparison is implicit. Only a linking verb is used to make the connection.

The rose vine found its way through a space in the trellis choked with poison ivy.

This sentence uses *personification* by applying human-like acts like "finding its way" and "choking" to non-human things.

ELEMENTS OF FICTION

Main Lesson: Theme

Theme may be called any of these labels, depending on the genre or kind of written work: message, lesson, moral of the story, world view, thesis, main topic, general idea, main point, etc.

What really matters is for the writer to simply use the theme as a guide, but not a noose, to write the rest of the text and to let the other literary elements work together to hint at it. In the final analysis, it is possible for the readers of the literary piece to find more than one intended theme, or a number of corollary ideas related to this theme.

Warm-up Activity: The World in Black and White

Flash several black-and-white pictures to the class. Black-and-white pictures are preferred as colored details tend to compete for the viewers attention. Black-and-white pictures, on the other hand, emphasize mood and a unified composition.

Ask the class to suggest possible themes for a poem or story based on each picture.

Creative Writing Exercise: Different Strokes for Different Folks

Choose one picture for the class to work on. Divide the class into 5 smaller groups. Ask each group to write a short narrative paragraph or descriptive verse based on a specific detail in the picture and how it works with or affects the rest of the photo. Then try to connect this to an over-all idea or theme.

For example, the picture could be a market scene. Ask one group to focus on the fish vendor; another group focuses on the vegetable cart; another deals with the muddy ground; the other group writes about the haggling crowd; and the last group tackles the mound of ripe mangoes on the table.

Language Trivia: Making the Abstract Concrete

Concrete words are those perceivable by the senses.
Abstract words deal mainly with intangible feelings or ideas or concepts. What we know or experience about abstractions are mere manifestations or representations of these.

For example, romantic love is abstract but we feel its manifestations through acts like kissing, hugging, or holding hands. We can also symbolically show this love through Hallmark greeting cards, a dozen red roses, or a box of imported chocolates. Each of these acts or things is concrete, but they do not, by themselves, stand for everything that is romantic love.

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