

# LESSON 2: CREATIVE NONFICTION/ PERSONAL ESSAY CLASS NOTES



## WHAT IS CREATIVE NON-FICTION?

*Creative nonfiction* (also known as literary nonfiction or narrative nonfiction) is a genre of writing that uses literary styles and techniques to create factually accurate narratives.

A *personal essay* is a form of creative non-fiction where the author's personal experience forms the foundation of the piece. Unlike a journalistic piece, the author is front and center in the story.

### Why write creative nonfiction?

- Presents facts in an engaging way
- Emotional engagement
- Personal attachment to the author

### 7 Elements of the Essay

1. The personal presence of the author
2. An engagement between the self and the world
3. The author's self-exploration and self-discovery
4. The need to both show and tell
5. Veracity/Authenticity
6. Mutability of form
7. A sense of intellectual plot, quest, engagement, or payoff

Think of the personal essay like a Russian Doll in reverse: You start with the small, your own personal experience or perspective, and expand outwards.



## CHALLENGE:

Create an outline for a creative nonfiction essay. Use the following questions to help develop your idea.

**Your Topic/Idea:** \_\_\_\_\_

- How can I present this idea in a creative way, using a scene, dialogue, or other components?
- What is my unique commentary on the scene (opinion, realization, analysis)?
- What does it mean in the larger context?
- How is the idea/experience/opinion changed or deepened from what it was in the beginning?

**Optional:** If you're feeling extra adventurous, try creating the opening paragraph. Use your skills of "showing" that we learned the previous lesson to set the stage for the narrative.

**Tip:** Remember the personal exploration component of the essay. Pick a topic or idea that you have some sort of personal connection to—something that you are interested in exploring in yourself, something that strikes a chord with you emotionally.

Sources: *The portable MFA in Creative Writing: Improve your craft with the core essentials taught to MFA students*. Copyright 2006 by New York Writers Workshop. Published by Writer's Digest Books.

**Email your challenge to [laurelnakai@gmail.com](mailto:laurelnakai@gmail.com) by Feb. 22**